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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 582. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 24TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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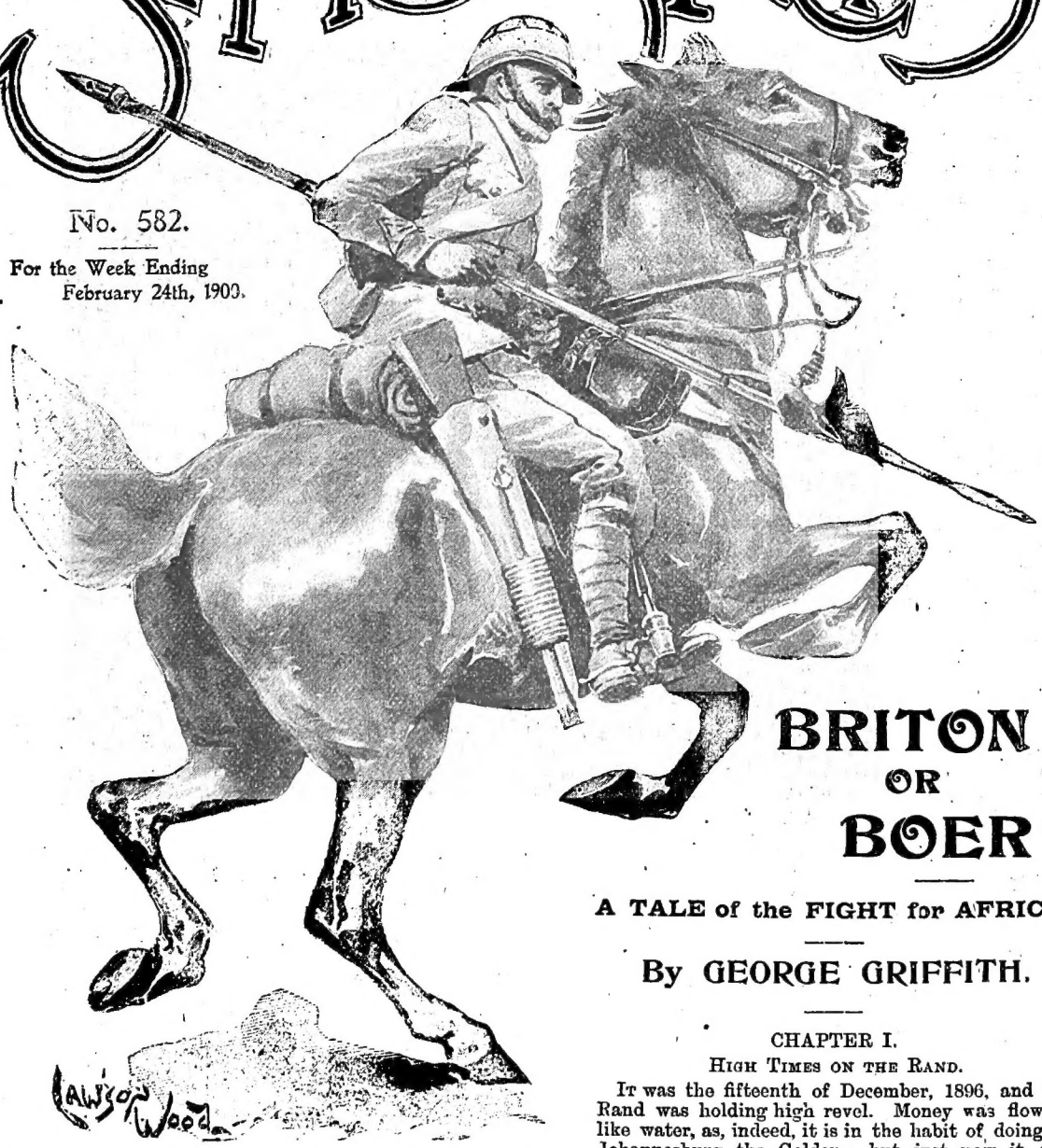
For the Week Ending
February 24th, 1900.



BRITON OR BOER?

A TALE of the FIGHT for AFRICA

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

CHAPTER I.

HIGH TIMES ON THE RAND.

IT was the fifteenth of December, 1896, and the Rand was holding high revel. Money was flowing like water, as, indeed, it is in the habit of doing in Johannesburg the Golden; but just now it was flowing even more freely than ever, mostly in the form of champagne at twenty-five and thirty shillings a bottle, and whisky and soda at eighteen-pence a time

The New Ophir seemed, in fact, to have gone upon a general spree. Commissioner Street was a scene of intermittent revelry from end to end. Everybody who met anybody else with whom he was ever so slightly acquainted shook hands effusively, and promptly adjourned with him to the nearest bar to have a drink and discuss the great, good news, and drink the Old Man's jolly good health.

From the bar of the Rand Club to the lowest canteen down along the Reef, more liquor was being passed over the counter to the minute than had ever passed before, even when Johannesburg was booming its best. More than this, too, the bars witnessed the strange spectacle of well-dressed, carefully-groomed Outlanders—Englishmen, Americans, and Colonials, hobnobbing with big, ill-clad, shaggy-bearded Boers, shaking hands with them, clapping them on

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the back, and clinking glasses just as though no such thing as the Reform Committee or the Jameson Raid had ever been heard of.

Everybody was the best of friends with everybody else, not an Outlander had a bad word even for Dr. Leyds and the Hollander Ring of monopolists, concessionaires and official peculators which revolved about him.

The space between the Chains was the scene of better and brisker business than had ever been known before, even at the best of times, and men of millions were walking about smiling like the most guileless of seraphs, and giving good things away to all and sundry with a freedom and urbanity that would have made an unsophisticated stranger believe that their principal object in heaping up riches was to have the satisfaction of bestowing a portion of them upon other people.

No one who knew Johannesburg ever so slightly would for a moment dream that such a hard-headed and business-like community would go off into such a fit of genial hysterics as this without adequate cause, and this in the present case was not very far to seek, since everybody was talking about it with a wealth of vocabulary and picturesqueness of expression, even more than usually characteristic of Johannesburg conversation.

To put the matter shortly, the reason for the unrestrained hilarity of the Golden City stood as follows:

Ever since the release of the Reform leaders and the cashing of the little cheques they left behind them when they bade adieu to their gaolers at Pretoria, the President and his government had pursued a policy of conciliation towards the Outlander population which, to the astonishment of the whole world, not only passed the bounds of fairness, but even trenched closely on the borders of generosity. Old offences were forgiven if not forgotten, duties were reduced, taxes had been made lighter, and one or two monopolies had even been abolished; in fact, the Boer lion showed every sign of an honest disposition to lie down with the Outlander lamb without going through the formality of first having the lamb for supper.

And now the climax had been reached and the crowning act of generosity had been accomplished. On the first of December the Volksraad had passed and the Executive had published a decree, duly signed by the President and the Secretary of State, giving the franchise and full burgher rights to every Outlander of full age who had paid his taxes regularly and had owned property to the value of £500 and upwards in the Transvaal for a minimum of three years.

The decree was to come into force on the sixteenth of December (Amajuba Day), and was to be formally proclaimed by the President at the great Annual Independence Festival under the shadow of the monument at Krugersdorp.

There was doubtless a certain amount of irony in the choice of the date, but this was put down to the Boer conception of humour; and as everybody was much too pleased to feel in a critical mood, it was taken as a sort of cumbrous joke such as Oom Paul made when he opened the Jewish Synagogue in Johannesburg with the words: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I declare this place of worship open!" and smiled accordingly.

As a matter of fact, no one, saving only a certain strong, silent man far away in the heart of the Northern wilds and a few irreconcilable cavillers who thought that they could see farther through the fog of Pretorian diplomacy than anybody else, was in any humour to find fault with the situation; and the world at large, and the Little Englanders in particular, drew rhetorical pictures of the good old President in which his grey hairs seemed to be already shining in the light of a halo of saintship.

A chorus of his admirers all the world over arose, asking—nay, almost demanding—that the complete independence of the Transvaal should be acknowledged by the Paramount Power in return for this great act of forgiveness and generosity, and that Great Britain should withdraw the barrier which she had placed between the Boer Republic and its legitimate desire for free access to the sea.

And now, on the eve of Amajuba Day the Rand was celebrating the near approach of its political emancipation with a luxuriant magnificence worthy of a city of millionaires. There was racing on the racecourse; an athletic tournament, followed by a huge garden-party given by the Wanderers' Club, in Kruger's Park; the theatre and the music halls were thrown open free for the night by Mr. Barney Barnato, who bought all the seats in them, and then, in the formula of his early profession, invited the public to "walk up."

Mr. J. B. Robinson arranged for a special service of free trains between Pretoria and Johannesburg. Mr. Alfred Beit, to whom the olive branch of forgiveness had also been extended, capped this by running specials for three days at his own expense from Cape Town and Kimberley. Mr. Solly Joel arranged for a service from Port Elizabeth and Natal, whereupon Mr. Barnato, thinking he was getting left behind, quietly sent a circular-note round the hotels and bars to the effect that he would pay the drink bill of Johannesburg for the evening, and there were those who said that this proved to be the biggest order of all.

The day's festivities, so far as the *élite* of the Rand society and the *haut ton* of Pretoria were concerned, wound up with a ball at the Rand Club, the like of which, for brilliancy and splendour, had never been seen in South Africa before.

The club house at the corner of Commissioner Street and Loveday Street came as near to being a roofed-in, walled-off section of Paradise as unlimited money and a somewhat florid taste could make it. Everyone who was anyone was there, saving only the good President himself, who true to the austere principles which had made him refuse an invitation to a State Ball in England on account of the shocking costumes of the ladies, had sent his young and handsome State Secretary to represent him, while he remained to smoke many pipes and indulge in a quiet orgy on coffee on the stoep of his house in Pretoria, now and then exchanging a phrase of ponderous endearment or elphantine sarcasm on the pomps and vanities of the wicked world with Tant' Sanna, and anon lapsing into silent contemplation of great things to come.

Certainly he could have chosen no more acceptable substitute than Doctor Cornelius Leyds, especially in the eyes of the ladies who, with the richness of their costumes, the splendour of their jewels, and in some cases the grace of their forms and the beauty of their faces, gave their chief charm to the gorgeous rooms of the Rand Club.

So far at least as the ladies were concerned—and that after all was everything—he was the lion of the evening. Rumour had credited him, perhaps justly, with having completely abandoned his old hostility to his fellow Outlanders, and with having exerted all his great influence with the President and the Volksraad to secure the generous concession over which Johannesburg was now rejoicing.

And yet, if the truth must be told, the handsome young

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Everybody was the best of friends with everybody else.

Secretary had not been a couple of hours in the midst of what not a single newspaper on the Rand could refrain the next morning from calling "the festive scene," before he began to feel a little tired of it.

There was altogether too much gorgeousness to suit his really refined tastes. The scent of the flowers was too strongly blended with artificial perfumes. Too many of the women were in one sense over, and in another, underdressed. There was a lack of genuineness about too many of the complexions. There was too much jewellery and too little taste to please his fastidious judgment. Most of the men's voices were too loud, and their diamond studs too big;

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and altogether there was an aggressive assertion of mere crude wealth that jarred upon him and set him already wishing for the hour at which he could decently take his leave.

He had been standing for some minutes near the top of the big dining saloon which was being used as a ballroom, exchanging views and criticisms on the more interesting personalities of the company with a short, sturdily-built man with a powerful head and a round, good-natured face, lit up by a pair of bright, clever eyes, who looked shorter than he really was in comparison with the Secretary's tall and athletic figure.

He wore several orders on his left breast, and the collar and cross of the Order of Jesus lay snugly on the snowy expanse of his well-glazed shirt-front. This was Baron de Matalha, sometime Portuguese Ambassador, though an Englishman by birth, and one of the astutest diplomatists between the Cape and the Zambesi.

It was getting on towards midnight when the Secretary, smothering a yawn, chanced in the act of doing so to look up towards the door. It happened also at the same moment that the heavy purple velvet curtains which hung over the doorway were drawn aside and a woman entered leaning on the arm of a man.

The Secretary had seen the same thing happen a score of times within the last few minutes, and had hardly noticed it, but now all his *ennui* vanished in the instant of the first glance, his eye brightened, and a faint flush sprang into his somewhat sallow cheeks. He caught his companion by the arm and said with an eagerness which he took no trouble to conceal:

"Tell me, Baron—you know everybody—who is that? The girl I mean. The man is only interesting because he seems to be her father."

The Baron looked up half quizzically, and with a twinkle in his eyes, for none knew better than he the naturally masculine weakness of Mr. Secretary Leyds for a pretty face, and he did not see why it might not be indulged with no thought of disloyalty to Madame la Secretaire, who, as it happened, was at present away on a six months' tour in Holland and Germany. He rubbed his plump hands softly together, then he said with a quiet little chuckle running through his tones:

"Ah, my dear Doctor, I thought that a look upon the most beautiful face in South Africa would suffice to charm away the boredom, which I see this over-dressed, over-jewelled assembly has been inflicting upon you. I took the liberty of arranging her coming as a little surprise for you just about now, as I knew that an hour or so of this sort of thing would be enough to tire you."

"Ah, then you do know them?" said the Secretary as eagerly as before. "So of course you can introduce me. Who are they?"

"The old gentleman is Prince Paul Regna, a Polish nobleman of very old family, and, curiously enough for a Pole, very considerable fortune. The air of Russian-Poland does not agree with him just now, and he is travelling for his health round the world. In fact, if his fortune were not invested in Paris, he might not have the means of travelling."

"Yes, yes, my dear Baron," said the Secretary with some little impatience. "That's all right, but who is the lady? His daughter or his——"

"No, no, my dear Doctor," said the Baron with one of his blandest smiles. "Not his wife. But excuse me just a moment and you shall know, as I see you wish to know."

With that the Baron trotted off down the room to meet the new comers. The Secretary saw him salute them with his courtliest bow, and then he turned, and the three came towards him, the lady walking in the middle.

Experienced, nay, one might almost say hardened, as the Secretary was, something told him, vaguely yet unmistakably, that a new experience, nay, perhaps, even a crisis was about to come into his life. The ballroom with its gorgeous decorations, the sheen of splendid costumes, and the glitter of multitudinous jewels faded into an obscure blur which he thought of afterwards as a nebula in the sky with one brilliant star shining through the midst of it.

The loud hum of conversation, which had grown louder as the trio walked up the room towards him, died down to a faint, distant murmur. He saw and heard but two things with distinctness—one was the loveliest face he had ever looked upon, lit up by a great pair of liquid grey-blue eyes and crowned with thick coils of bright gold-brown hair, worn in complete and happy defiance of the ruling fashion, and the other was the little Baron's smoothest tone saying:

"The Princess Vavara Regna, who has expressly desired to be introduced not only to His Honour's representative, but also to the State Secretary."

He bowed in acknowledgment of the most graceful salutation he had ever seen a woman make, and murmured something, for the awkwardness and indistinctness of which he could afterwards have kicked himself; and then through the re-awakening buzz of conversation about him he heard a low, sweet, clear voice saying in the most exquisitely pronounced English—the language in which the Baron had made the introductions:

"If the Baron has told you anything about us you will understand, Mr. Secretary how it pleases us to make the acquaintance of one who has done so much for the cause of justice and freedom as you have."

If the tones had been less sweet or less even, or if the lovely eyes had not looked up to him with the light of such a perfect innocence shining in them, the Secretary might well have suspected some lurking irony beneath the compliment. But even had he done so, the suspicion would have vanished the next instant, for the Princess, with a delightfully frank defiance of conventionality, put out a little ungloved hand, which lay in his just for an instant, and then was gently and quickly withdrawn. Yet in that instant it somehow seemed to him that here, at the turning point of his political career, and on the eve of the greatest *coup* that had ever been planned in South Africa, his fate had all unexpectedly come to him, though he was naturally far from dreaming that the little hand whose warmth and softness was still setting his nerves a-tingle was destined to hold many more fates than his in its gentle yet pitiless grasp.

CHAPTER II.

An Experiment in Telegraphy.

Mr. Secretary Leyds never had any very clear idea as to how the next few minutes after his introduction to the Princess Vavara passed.

He shook hands with the Prince, who was a tall, sparely built man a little on the wrong side of fifty. His features were rather sharp in spite of their distinctly aristocratic moulding, his eyes were brilliant grey looking out under dark, straight brows, and his thick, carefully-trimmed hair seemed to have been slowly grizzling for some years, though

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his moustache and *favourite* were still dark with an apparently natural hue. His manner was a combination of repressed energy, perpetual alertness, and the easy repose of a man of perfect breeding and the best social experience.

But the Baron, like the astute and considerate diplomatist that he was, soon managed to monopolise the Prince's attention, leaving the Secretary free for pleasanter converse. Then the strains of an inviting waltz came floating up the room. The Princess, whether instinctively or by intention, began to mechanically draw her glove on, the usual words were said, and then the Secretary's arm stole round the slimmest, supplest waist that it had ever encircled, and he seemed to glide away into Paradise in the most fitting companionship that he could have chosen.

Dancing to perfection was one of his many accomplishments, and by no means the least useful of them, and now for the first time since he had left Berlin he had a partner worthy of him.

Naturally they had not gone very far before a good many eyes, some admiring and some perhaps a trifle envious, were turned upon them. He, quite apart from his official position, was undeniably the handsomest and most distinguished man in the company, and she was by far the most beautiful woman, but even apart from her beauty she could still have been singled out at a glance from all the other women in the room.

Her dress was as perfect in its taste as it was simple in its style, and while the others were mostly loaded with gold and blazing with jewels, she wore only a broad, old-fashioned looking collarette of dull gold round her throat, and a single big straw-coloured diamond which flashed like a golden star out of the darker haze of her hair.

The minutes of the waltz passed like a dream to him, and when it was over it seemed he had only really waltzed once in his life. But then into the midst of the pleasant half-reverie in which he seemed to have been living since he shook hands with her there came the imperative summons of sterner things. It was already after twelve and before morning he had a good deal to do—more indeed than he had ever done in his life before, for on the work of those few hours depended the making or marring of the *coup* which, as he believed, was to make or mar him.

"I didn't know how short the distance was between the Transvaal and Paradise until we began that waltz," he said, when the music had died away and her hand was resting on his arm. "And now, alas, I must get back to earth and the things that are earthy."

"That was very prettily put, Mr. Secretary," she said, with a quick upward look and an almost imperceptible laugh running through her tone, "quite the very reverse of what I should have expected in a country that I had been led to believe had hardly emerged from barbarism and was chiefly inhabited by half-savage farmers, who scarcely ever washed and always went to bed with their clothes on."

"Ah! that is only the English opinion of the Republic. You musn't take that as worth very much."

"Oh, I am beginning to learn that already, although I have only been here a day or two. Those English who want the world for their own have not forgiven Amajuba yet, any more than the French have forgiven Waterloo."

"England has not had her Waterloo in South Africa yet, Princess," said the Secretary, looking down at the lovely face that was suddenly turned up to his. There was an unconscious emphasis on the "yet" and a thrill of angry vibration running through the brief pregnant sentence which startled her and brought a look of innocent inquiry into her eyes.

"I should very much like to commit the indiscretion of asking you what you mean," she said with a sweet softness which the Secretary instinctively felt to be a trifle dangerous. "But from what you said just now I see that our first dance has, for the time being, been our last. We, too, must be thinking of getting back to Pretoria if we can manage to get a place in a train, for we have had rather a tiring day. I am an inveterate sightseer, you know, and I might never again have the chance of seeing Johannesburg *en fête*. We only really came in for half-an-hour or so to see the finale and to give the Baron a chance or redeeming his promise to introduce us to his Honour's representative—and the State Secretary."

"And in doing so you have given the Baron an opportunity of making me his debtor for life. And so you are staying at Pretoria? I am delighted to hear it because you will be safer—I mean, of course, more quiet and more comfortably situated than you could be here, and besides it enables me to do just a little trifle towards repaying you for the pleasure of that delightful waltz by offering you a compartment in my special train. It leaves at half-past twelve. Will that be too early for you?"

"That is really more than kind of you," she said, looking up at him again with a smile that would have repaid a hundred such services, "but really I don't think we ought to trespass so far on so short an acquaintance."

"It has lasted years already," said the Secretary with half unconscious impetuosity. "At least, it seems so to me. As for trespass it is out of the question. May I ask where you are staying at Pretoria?"

He was half afraid that the Princess might have resented the very obvious warmth of his tone, and that he was going to get a gentle but effectual snub, but there was no shadow of displeasure in the frank, innocent eyes that looked up into his, nor any note of anger in her voice as she replied:

"We are staying at the Grand, and my window is nearly opposite the window of that room in the Government Building where so many things must have happened within the last twelve months or so.

"Of course I don't know anything about politics; it is better not to do so in my country, but still I must confess that when I saw the lights there last night before I went to bed, I had a distinct desire for a sort of Röntgen-ray telescope that would enable me to see through the blind or the wall and a telephone or something that would have told me what you were all talking about. The walls of that room must have heard a good many things that Mr. Chamberlain, for instance, would have liked to hear over yonder in London."

As she said this she noticed an absolute change come over the Secretary's face. The frank, pleasant expression vanished in an instant, though only for an instant, and it became dark, saturnine, and almost repulsive. Then, as quickly as it had come, the cloud passed away and he said:

"I see you have the ordinary idea of statemanship-Princess. All plotting and counter-plotting, nations waylaying nations, as it were, in the dark, and Ministers laying pitfalls for other Ministers as it used to be a hundred years ago. I can assure you it is a much more innocent and commonplace business nowadays, especially since Mr. Chamberlain taught us how to play the game of Diplomacy with the cards on the table. But come, you have not told me whether I may have the pleasure of taking you to Pretoria or not."

"I must leave that to papa," she said. "Suppose we go and ask him."

There was the gentlest possible emphasis on the "we," barely perceptible and yet just enough to convey a shadowy suggestion of companionship which the Secretary found very pleasant.

The Prince, after a little courtly demurring, accepted the really serviceable offer, and after the Baron had amused himself by making a very few and very brief introductions among his own particular circle, and thereby raising an appreciable amount of envy and general uncharitableness in the souls of many outside that circle, the Secretary's carriage was announced and a few minutes later the four were on their way to the Park station.

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The special consisted only of an engine, a compartmented saloon, and a brake van, and it traversed the forty-six miles in the record time of an hour and ten minutes. When it pulled up at Pretoria platform the Princess was beginning to think that the Secretary had not been very far wrong in what he had said about the length of their acquaintanceship. They parted at the station after having made arrangements at the Secretary's earnest insistence to go and see the great Independence Gathering at Krugersdorp the next day in the President's special train.

The Prince and Princess drove straight to the hotel; the Baron took a Cape cart to his own chambers; and the Secretary drove off in his neat little brougham to the house he had just built for himself overlooking the park.

But when he got there the brougham only waited for a few minutes, during which he went in and came out again with a little locked leather satchel in his hand; then he drove rapidly down to the Government Building, and dismissed his carriage under the porch.

When the Prince and Princess reached the hotel they went straight upstairs to the Prince's room. This was No. 47, and opened out on to the balcony which runs round the two sides of the building. Immediately opposite is the Government Building, and almost in a straight line from the window is the top of the side entrance from which the private Government wires cross the street to a telegraph-pole about four yards from the balcony.

The Prince knocked softly at the door, which was rather a singular thing for him to do, seeing that it was his own room. The door was open by a clean-shaven young man, who, from his dress, seemed to be something between a confidential servant and a secretary. He bowed low as they entered and then locked the door behind them.

"Have you made the preparations, Dmitri?" the Prince said in Russian.

"Yes, Nobleness, everything is prepared. The wire works excellently, and I have already taken a message by way of trial. It is to the terminus at Malmani desiring repetition of news from Mafeking. Here is the translation of it."

"Very good," said the Prince. "And you have sent it on?"

"Yes, Nobleness, nearly half an hour ago. The reply has not come yet. I have been waiting for it."

"Very good again; then we are in time to receive it," said the Princess with one of her prettiest smiles, "before we pass it on to our friend the Secretary across the road. What a really charming man he is, and how very angry he would be with me if he only knew!"

As she said this she went to what looked like, and in fact was a type-writer case standing on the table near the window. She lifted it up and disclosed, instead of a type-writer, two dainty little telegraph instruments, a receiver and a transmitter, and from each of these a fine insulated electric thread ran from the table through the open window over the rail of the balcony.

From there one of them ran up to the private Government wires, which it was wound once completely round, and the other was similarly involved with the wires on the other side of the telegraph-post. She glanced over to the lighted windows of the Executive Chamber with a pretty smile on her lips and a wicked, laughing look in her eyes. Then she said:

"Put the lights out, Dmitri, and make the coffee," and sat down to the instruments. Dmitri extinguished two of the three lamps that were burning in the room; the third was a little lamp completely shaded save where it threw a narrow fan of light on the table in front of the operator. From the street there was no more glow apparent in the windows than might have come from a shaded nightlight.

The hours came and went in silence broken only by the soft clicking of the instruments and an occasional gently-spoken word or two as sheet after sheet of cypher was passed from the Princess to her father for translation according to the code which lay before him as he sat beside her at the table.

Then as the clock of the Government House chimed half-past four, the lights in the Executive Chamber went out, and Mr. Secretary Leyds, President Kruger, and Vice-President Joubert, went home to bed, all perhaps to dream dreams of coming greatness, and the first possibly to mingle other and fairer visions with them in happy ignorance of the fact that an exact copy of every message that had been dispatched from and received in the Executive Chamber during the night lay under the pillow of the lovely Polish exile whose eyes might have lent an added brightness to the golden prospect of his illimitable ambition, but for the existence of the demure little Dutchwoman whom he had sent away to her home on the banks of the Y in view of the trouble to come.

By the time it was light enough to have seen them from the street the almost invisible wires had vanished, and as soon as the telegraph office was open Dmitri went across the square and despatched a message to Mr. Michael Ostroff at the Central Hotel, Lorenço Marquez, requesting that his master the Prince's luggage might be sent up without delay.

Within a couple of hours from the despatch of this message Mr. Michael Ostroff went on board a smart looking little steam yacht which lay a couple of hundred yards from the end of the jetty, and steamed straight out to sea, past Inyack Island until the little yacht was lost to the sight of a solitary watcher on Reuben Point in the vast smooth expanse of the Indian Ocean.

CHAPTER III.

Light Words on Weighty Matters.

A couple of hours' sound and dreamless sleep, followed by a bath and the pleasureable occupation of making a most bewitching toilet, sent the Princess Vavara down to breakfast with an excellent appetite and looking as fresh and

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alert as though she had gone to bed with the sun instead of with the dawn and quite prepared for the fatigues of a day of sightseeing, which, as she now knew, would also be a day of no little excitement.

The Prince too, came down looking as though he had passed the night between the sheets instead of sitting at a table translating cypher telegrams, and both were in the excellent spirits that might have been expected to inspire people who had done a thoroughly satisfactory night's work. They had a table to themselves in the big dining-room of the Grand Hotel out of ear-shot of anyone but the waiter, and as he didn't understand a word of Russian they felt justified in conversing with a certain amount of freedom.

"I would give something considerable," said the Princess as he put down her half-emptied cup of the coffee specially brewed by Dmitri in place of the intolerable stuff purveyed by the Transvaal hotel-keepers. "Yes, I really would give a good deal to be in Mr. Chamberlain's room in Downing Street when he gets the news of to-day's proceedings. I wonder whether his eye-glass will fall out when he reads the first telegram, which I suppose will reach him from Petersburg. What a set of fools these English are after all! It makes one wonder how they ever got hold of as much of the earth as they did."

"There is no wonder about that, my child," said the

Prince gravely, looking up rather wearily from a piece of fish that was unusually hard and stringy even for a Pretorian breakfast-table. "It is not the English who are fools; it is the people they are foolish enough to allow to govern them. Despotism is bad, perhaps—one may say that here even, though, this place is the heart of a despotism but where empire-making and keeping are concerned democracy is worse.

"The English, as you have seen in the House of Commons, elect one party to carry on the business of the nation, and another to prevent them doing so, and then some of them elect another party—those little Englanders, as they call them—that, I believe, is the way they spell traitor in England, and then, of course——"

"They proceed to prove the wisest of men wrong in what he said about there being wisdom in the multitude of counsellors," said the Princess, putting down her fish-knife and fork in despair.

"Exactly," said the Prince, handing her the menu. "This fish is intolerable. A continent that can produce no better fish than this hardly deserves a better rule than that of the Boers. Yes, it is really quite pathetic to see what is actually the greatest empire in the world befooled and defied by a little twopenny-halfpenny state like this almost entirely encircled by British possessions. I wonder how far these good Boers would have got with their armaments if the surrounding territory had been Russian instead of British?"

"And I wonder," said the Princess with a little, low laugh, "what sort of an answer our good friend the Secretary would have got if he had sent that divinely impudent message of his to the Nevski Prospekt instead of Downing Street?"

"An instant summons to disarm backed by the dispatch of fifty thousand troops," said the Prince with not a very pleasant smile. "Russia allows no open sores like this in the midst of her dominions. But there—that is somewhat idle talk, for Russia is not cursed with politicians, and so she has never had an Amajuba Hill."

Here the waiter came with the inevitable outlets, and when he had put them down and filled the empty coffee-cups Prince Paul went on in his low, gentle voice:

"Really it is almost pathetic to stand by and watch the beginning of the break-up of the greatest empire the world has ever seen. I am their enemy, as every good Russian must be, and yet I say the sight is pitiful, for the English are a gallant race and have done many wonders in the world; but that was in the old days before telegraphs were invented to paralyse the hands of the real empire-makers."

"They acted on their own judgment and of their own strength, and before the news got home or politicians had time to snarl about it the Empire was richer by a province or two. Nowadays if a little freebooting expedition is arranged news flashes home, orders flash back, and before the expedition has got twenty miles on its road it is disowned and denounced, all aid is cut off, and the result is——"

"Doornkop!" said the Princess softly with one of her sweetest smiles. "Ah, well, we manage these things a little better in Russia, don't we? But still you must confess that this little *coup d'état* of the Secretary has been most exactly planned so far. What a useful man we should make of him in Petersburg."

"Yes," said the Prince with an approving nod. "He is undoubtedly a most capable young man, but you must remember that Uncle Paul and the General are also very able old men. To my mind Leyds has shown his greatest cleverness in making them act upon his views as though they were their own. I consider that to be the acme of statesmanship in a young man."

"And the result?" asked the Princess, putting her elbow on the table and leaning her chin in the palm of her hand. "What is your candid opinion of that?"

"For the present, at least," replied the Prince very deliberately, "there can only be one result, and that is the natural and legitimate consequence of the policy of fatuity tempered with fright which the British Government has been pursuing for the last year or so. The sages of Downing Street have been sitting still and watching the Boers arming throughout the country, and meanwhile they have been apologetically sending two or three hundred men into their own dominions to fight the niggers, apparently thinking that the Boers were arming to do the same.

"They must know, even if they are English politicians, that the vast majority of the Dutch element in the Cape Colony and Natal are not only hopelessly disloyal but exceedingly well armed. At least if they don't know now they will by to-morrow morning, for if Leyds' calculations are correct, as they probably are, there will be between eighty and ninety thousand Boers and Afrikanders under arms soon after sunrise, and I don't suppose that if every English soldier and loyal Colonial who has got arms and can use them, including even the troops who are busy with the niggers in Matabeleland, were to turn out there would be much more than twenty thousand of them, and of these not much more than five or six thousand would be actually trained to fight; while these Boers are always in training for their own peculiar style of warfare. No, I don't think there can be any doubt about the result—at least the immediate result."

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"And after that?" the Princess murmured inquiringly over the edge of her coffee-cup.

"Ah!" said the Prince even more deliberately than before. "That is trenching on a much wider question. You see South Africa, with its gold and diamonds, and its illimitable agricultural possibilities is hardly the kind of country that could be properly left to the tender mercies of such people as these. They will do a useful work in striking the blow that will detach a large portion of the British Empire, for when the English Colossus has lost such a big limb as this it may reasonably be expected to bleed appropriately. But after that—well, we shall see. By the way, I hope Ostroff got that telegram all right. Ah, the idea just struck me at the right time. Here comes Dmitri with what looks like his answer."

He took the brick-red envelope and opened it, then with a glance at the contents he threw the paper across to Vavara and said:

"You see the luggage is coming up at once. That will do, Dmitri, except that we shall want a carriage for the station in fifteen minutes." Then as Dmitri disappeared he went on: "How very much better that form of communication is than cypher. I wonder what Mr. Secretary Leyds as censor of telegrams would have thought if he could have guessed the meaning of that."

"I would rather know," laughed the Princess, "what our dear and deluded young friend will say, probably under his breath, when he gets the news of the friendly visit of our Eastern squadron to Delagoa Bay just twenty-four hours before the Germans are expected. By-the-way, papa," she went on with the most perfect coolness, "it's a decided pity that this excellent young man is married to a staid Dutch vrow, isn't it, though, of course, that can't be allowed to matter? Do you think he is in a fair way to fall in love with me? I decidedly thought he was last night, but of course that may only be my feminine vanity; you would look on with more dispassionate eyes."

"As far as my own experience takes me," said the Prince with an approving smile, "I should be inclined to say that it won't be very long before you'll have him at your feet. Without any flattery, I have never seen the comedy played better. If I am any judge of male human nature I should describe him as a man who, after several successful comedies in that line, is beginning to play his first tragedy.

"And yet you know, my dear Vavara," he went on with a quizzical note running through his voice and a slight crinkling at the corners of his eyes, "if anything were to happen—which the Fates forfend—to Madame, there are many meaner destinies than might befal the wife of a man—especially a young, handsome, and very able man like Leyds—who will probably before long be President of the United States of South Africa, with practically illimitable wealth at his command, and the means of buying a well-equipped fleet or two, and setting-up in business as a full fledged Republican despot—for I suppose he and his Hollanders will take their cue from South America in the matter of governing."

"If I did not see that you were joking, papa, I should be inclined to be angry," said the Princess with a faint flush on her cheeks and a flash in her eyes. "What!—a Hollander, and a man who would have to become a widower first. Why I would sooner marry an Englishman. Now I think it's time to go and get ready," and with that she rose from her chair and walked towards the door followed by the eyes of every man and woman in the room.

The Prince finished his coffee and went after her with a soft little chuckle at her last words. As he reached the vestibule a Victoria, drawn by a beautiful pair of greys, pulled up at the door, and the next moment the Secretary was standing before him holding out his hand.

Vavara was about half way up the first flight of the broad stairs in front of the door. As she stopped and turned half round to see who the new arrival was, the young Doctor looked up and thought he had never seen a more beautiful picture. She turned and came downstairs again, looking for all the world like a girl who has unexpectedly met the man who may be her lover, and the pretty lips, which a minute or two before had been curled in scorn at the mention of his name, were smiling their sweetest as she answered his morning greeting.

"I am glad to see that your late hours have had no evil effect on you, Princess," he said as his hand closed on hers.

"Late hours?" she said. "We don't call two o'clock very late at home. We don't go to bed with the sun, you know, as your good, simple-minded peasants do here. I can assure you I passed a most excellent night. And you, Mr. Secretary?"

"I never slept better or dreamed pleasanter dreams in my life," he said with more meaning in his tones than his words.

"I am sure you deserve them, whatever they were," she said with a smile of delightful frankness, "for I have no doubt you were working pretty hard over yonder."

"How do you know that?" he said a trifle sharply.

Her eyes met his with a steady glance of perfect innocence and frankness as she replied:

"I saw your shadow on the blind just as I was putting my light out. Now I must go and put my hat on. Our carriage will be here in a minute or two."

"But I have brought mine with the purpose of asking you to make use of it, if you will so far honour it and me."

Vavara shot a quick glance at her father, who instantly took the cue and said:

"Really, Mr. Secretary, you are allowing us to get too deeply into your debt. Still the offer is too good-natured to be refused. Vavara, go and get your things on. One should never keep good horses waiting."

"Or good Secretaries either," the Princess murmured just audibly, as with a pretty half nod towards them, she turned and went up stairs again.

"We have time to divide a small bottle of Goublet, Prince, if you have a mind," said the Secretary. "His Honour won't be coming up for nearly half-an-hour yet, so we can easily be at the station before him. To tell you the truth I shall not be sorry if you will join me, for I had very little sleep last night and plenty of hard work—seeing that all the preparations for to-day were in proper order, you know."

"I shall be most happy," said the Prince. "Yes, I suppose you had rather a busy night, and you will have even a busier day I presume," he went on as they sat down at one of the side tables in the vestibule and a waiter brought the wine. "It will be a spectacle which I can assure you I shall consider it a great privilege to witness. The concourse of a brave people celebrating the freedom which its own valour won from a powerful tyrant."

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"From a tyrant that once was powerful, you mean, Prince," said the Secretary with a sneer that he took no trouble to disguise. "A nation that could make such an unmitigated fool of itself as England made of herself after Amajuba may safely be looked upon as what the French call *un pouvoir fini*. Besides England is not ruled by statesmen now; she only has politicians, and with them one can do anything."

"As you did over the Jameson business, eh?" laughed the Prince as he raised his glass to his lips. "Well, I am no friend of these grasping English as I think I told you last night, so here's to the drawing of the Lion's fang's, or such stumps as he may have left, and prosperity to the United States of South Africa — and their future President!"

The eyes of the two men met as the last words were spoken slowly and deliberately. The Secretary's face flushed, and his eyes kindled, but Prince Paul's was as calm as if he had uttered the merest commonplace.

"I will answer your toast to-night, Prince," said the Secretary, and as he spoke the Prince noticed a little catch in his voice. "At present I will content myself with thanking you for it. Here's to all you say."

Then they drained their glasses together and the Prince heard the Secretary's clink ever so faintly against his teeth. His eyes were fixed on the staircase and the flush on his cheeks had deepened. The Prince looked round, and, as he expected, saw his daughter coming down the stairs.

CHAPTER IV.

Amajuba Day, 1896.

A really pretty woman seldom looks more fascinating than she does when she is frowning good humouredly; at least so the Secretary thought when Vavara came towards the table looking in mock displeasure at the empty champagne glasses and saying:

"Mr. Secretary, this is hardly what I expected to find one of the leaders of a simple-lived, pastoral people doing a few minutes after eight o'clock in the morning. I hope you are not beginning to corrupt them with the wickednesses of European civilisation. You know the example of those in high places goes far."

There was an undercurrent of irony, almost indeed of chaff running through her tone that the Doctor hardly relished. He somehow didn't like the idea that she should know the Boer character as he knew it. He felt that if she did, not even the leader of such a people could hope to stand very high in her favour. Still he comforted himself with the thought that after all she could not know very much and that only from hearsay probably in England, and everybody knew the truth was never told there about the Boers except perhaps by the Little Englanders whom the Boers themselves laughed at. As he rose from his seat he said:

"I plead guilty, Princess, to the champagne if not to the corruption. You may call it a relic of the bad habits I learnt in Europe."

"Ah, yes," she said very sweetly. "In Berlin, I suppose—when you went to have your throat attended to. I am so glad to see how completely it is cured."

Now politically, if not physically speaking, his throat was rather a sore point with the Secretary for, in spite of the ingenuous explanations of Baron de Quarles and his own emphatic statements, evil minded sceptics wilfully persisted in making unpleasant allusions to political matters whenever that throat was mentioned. And yet, keen reader and all as he was of human character, the fair, frank face before him told him nothing, and the tone in which the words were spoken rang so absolutely true that there was nothing for him but to utter a few conventional words of thanks and then suggest that it was time to start for the station.

But a spirit of mischief seemed to have taken possession of the Princess Vavara that morning, possibly as a natural consequence of the complete success of her night's work, and as they were driving up Markt Straat she looked back at the big block of Government Buildings and said:

"Is it true, Mr. Secretary, that a few years ago your Parliament used to meet in a little one-storeyed thatched house, and that in those days Pretoria was only a little village?"

"Yes," said the Secretary. "That was how the English left it. They never seemed to think the country worth developing."

"But it must have cost a great deal of money to make all this change. Where on earth did it all come from? From the gold mines, I suppose."

"Or rather from those who made the gold mines," the Prince chimed in with a laugh. "No offence, Mr. Secretary, those people are only fit to be taxed. If they had been worth anything more they would either have taken the country or swamped the Government by this time. They are numerous enough and rich enough to do it, I suppose."

"Undoubtedly, but they have no ideas beyond money-making in spite of their talk about reform. Why, just imagine, in that fiasco which they call the Revolution they never pulled up a rail or cut a wire until one of their most prominent leaders rode down from Park Station to Roodeport on a luggage train and pulled up a few rails to prevent the ammunition train getting to our people at Krugersdorp. He had no idea the train he rode down on was the ammunition train, and that he pulled up the rails behind instead of in front of it. What can you do with people like that except tax them?"

"And yet you are going to practically admit the whole lot to the Franchise to-day?"

"Yes, we are—on certain conditions, which you will hear from the President's proclamation."

"I suppose it would be indiscreet to ask you if it would be possible to gratify our curiosity beforehand?" the Princess asked in the tone of one who expects "no" for an answer.

The Secretary was silent for a moment, during which he gave a little pull at his handsome moustache, then he said with a little laugh:

"For the first time, Princess, I am going to refuse you, not because I wish to disappoint a very natural curiosity, but because I absolutely decline to spoil for you what I think will be the finest dramatic effect you have ever seen."

"That is just what I deserve for my indiscretion, for now, of course, you have increased my curiosity tenfold. I wonder if I could get it out of the President after you have introduced us."

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"You are at the most perfect liberty to try, my dear Princess," laughed the Secretary. "Do you speak the Taal?"

"What's that?"

"The combination of unpleasant sounds and imperfect grammar which our good burghers are pleased to call a language. It is not a musical tongue, and I must confess that His Honour doesn't speak it to advantage, but you will be able to judge of that for yourself to-day."

"But doesn't His Honour speak English?"

"The old gentleman understands it perfectly, and speaks it very passably, but hatred of England, and all things English, is, and very properly too, part of his religion, and so officially the language is a dead letter to him. Well, here we are. I don't suppose he will be very long after us. If you'll follow me I'll get you a good place. Ah, there is the Baron. Come, I will put you into his charge, as I shall be busy for a few minutes. You couldn't be in better hands. He is the best natured and most obliging man in Pretoria."

"Except one," murmured the Princess as the Secretary handed her out of the carriage.

They passed through the double lines of the Guard of Honour, composed of the newly-organised State Artillery, gorgeous in new uniforms and showing a thoroughly German precision of dress and attitude, as was only natural seeing that about half of them had served their time in the German Army, and that the whole corps was drilled and almost entirely officered by Germans.

The Baron came to meet them at the station gates resplendent in his Orders, and arrayed in the whitest and stiffest of shirts and the glossiest of broadcloth, and beaming with good nature and justifiable importance. The Secretary went and joined the other members of the Executive who were waiting to receive the President, and as he stood among them the Prince could not help saying to the Baron:

"Don't you think our friend the Secretary shows to great advantage among those other people? What an exceedingly common-looking lot they are, and how frightfully they are dressed! Why didn't they remain faithful to the ancient costume of their country? Some of them would look quite picturesque dressed like those men in the long boots and broad hats that you see going along beside the bullock-waggons."

"Wait till you see His Honour himself," whispered the Baron with a wicked twinkle in his eyes, "but for Heaven's sake have your facial muscles well under control. Ah, there he comes!"

"What a very warlike turn-out for the ruler of such a peace-loving-people," said the Princess in a low tone to the Baron. "Why, the Emperor himself is not guarded like that when he drives about Petersburg. Surely you have no Nihilists in Pretoria?"

"No," said the Baron. "Only Outlanders and Englishmen."

"To say nothing of German Jews and Hollanders," added the Prince with a gentle smile. "I wonder which will prove the most dangerous in the long run? But really the old gentleman seems to like to be well guarded."

As they were saying this a small, neat brougham, drawn by a pair of bright bays, was coming up the road at a rattling trot in the midst of a cloud of dust. Six mounted police in black patent riding boots, close-fitting white breeches, blue tunics, and white spiked helmets, rode in front, two more were at each side, and six behind, each with a loaded revolver at his hip and the butt of a loaded rifle resting on his thigh.

The Guard stood to attention as the carriage approached. It pulled up at the end of the double line, a couple of sentries strode forward, one opened the door and the two stood, one on either side of it, with the rifles at the salute.

Vavara saw a big, ungainly form, almost elephantine in

shape and proportions, climb down awkwardly through the narrow door. It was arrayed in shiny broadcloth, and a broad sash, not at all unlike the adornment affected by Good Templars on parade, had been apparently thrown over the badly-fitting frock coat, which, as usual, was buttoned by a single button across the chest.

As the figure turned she saw a few orders and stars sparkling on the black cloth. A not particularly good silk hat was planted firmly on the back of a big head, and from under it looked a very big red face, set off by a long, ragged fringe of grey hair that ran from ear to ear under the heavy chin.

Then the figure turned again, after bobbing clumsily in acknowledgment of the salute of the Guards, and helped the female counterpart of itself out of the carriage, after which Oom Paul and Tant' Sanna walked up arm in arm between the files of the Guard attended by the members of the Executive, hat in hand.

A few moments later the presentation took place, and Princess Vavara felt her dainty little hand resting in the limp grasp of a huge hairless paw, and found herself looking up into one of the most grossly animal faces she had ever seen. She repressed an almost irresistible shiver, and hid the change of expression that came over her face by a graceful curtsey, which won from Oom Paul a fat, approving smile. Then she heard something between a chuckle and a grunt which she correctly took for the Presidential salutation, and then she shook hands with Tant' Sanna while her father was being presented to His Honour. After that the Presidential party with the *élite* of the Executive boarded the special train, and left the station amidst a chorus of cheers, and a salvo of rifle-shots.

At Johannesburg there was a tremendous ovation waiting for the good President who was about to do the loyal Outlanders justice at last, and at Krugersdorp the train seemed to Vavara to be running

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through innumerable multitudes of people and whole towns of white-tented waggons. Indeed, as she said to the Secretary, she could never have believed there were so many people in all the Transvaal.

There was very little interest either for Prince Paul or his daughter until the President rose on the platform under the base of the Monument of Independence to make his long-awaited proclamation. But as she looked round over the sea of stern, rugged faces that surrounded the platform and the monument and watched the varying waves of expression that swept over them she saw that every man and woman was hanging on the rough fast-flowing words as though they were the very words of life and death, as in good truth they were destined one day to be. And when the climax came, prepared and all as she and her father were for it by their previous knowledge, it seemed to come upon both of them like a thunderclap out of the silence of a summer evening.

The President had begun his oration as usual by recounting the brave deeds of the Voortrekkers and the triumphs of the War of Independence. Then he went on to the reform movement in Johannesburg and the Jameson Raid, and this brought him to the Proclamation itself. He read it through to the last paragraph, and then a deep hush fell over the vast assembly, and Boer and Outlander looked at each other in the face in silence. Hands were clenched and here and there cheeks grew pale, for that last pregnant paragraph proclaimed the abrogation of the Convention of London, and the absolute independence of the South African Republic, and restricted the promised franchise to those of the Outlanders who were ready, not only to abjure their allegiance to their own countries, but to spend their means and, if necessary, shed their blood in defence of the land which henceforth would claim them absolutely as its own.

As the President thundered out the last words he threw the parchment down and launched out into an exhortation aglow with rugged eloquence, calling upon his people and his children to stand by him in the last great struggle of the life that he had devoted to them and their country. Suddenly in the midst of his peroration he stopped, picked up a little bundle from the table, and shook it out.

It was a Union Jack.

A mighty chorus of howls and hoots and hisses instantly greeted the hated flag, and in the midst of it the President spread it out before them. Then, with a sudden wrench of his powerful hands, he ripped it in twain, and, flinging the two pieces to the ground, the shouted at the top of his great voice:

"So shall Africa be torn from England! We and our fathers made Africa, and we will have it. Our brethren in the South are only waiting to join hands, as they have already joined hearts, with us. What we have won with the rifle we will keep with the rifle. Stand fast for the Land, my children, and the God of your fathers will stand by you! By to-morrow morning there will be a hundred thousand burghers under arms from the Krokodil to the Cape. Do not you be the last among them, my children. Strike straight and hard for land and home and freedom. Stand side by side as brothers should, and forget not *Eendracht maakt Macht!*" *

No words could even faintly depict the scene which followed when the storm of cheering had died down into the calm of reaction. Great, rugged, grim-faced men whose whole lives had been battles with the wilderness and the enemies of the Land fell into each other's arms and sobbed like children. Some caught up their wives or little ones in their arms and kissed them frantically, and some gripped the barrels of their rifles with one hand, and the hand of a friend or comrade with the other, and eye met eye in a silence that said more than words.

But on the great deputation that had come from Johannesburg to present an address of thanks to the President after the reading of the Proclamation the last fatal clause fell like an exploding shell. Once more the sinuous diplomacy of the Boer had cheated and outwitted them. It was not political freedom that was given to them but the choice between commercial ruin and taking arms against the country of their birth. To refuse the Franchise would, they well knew, mean confiscation and expulsion, even if they got off with their lives. To accept it meant, in addition to treason, taking the chances of a long and bitter war which would bring paralysis of industry, stoppage of trade and financial panic as certainly as the rising sun brought the daylight.

When the first shock of the panic had passed they were staring mutely into each others' faces. A prominent citizen and millionaire who had been appointed to read the address said in a somewhat husky voice:

"We are spoofed again, boys, and badly too this time. These chaps can't play a straight game; the Lord didn't make them that way. Well, the Old Man's got us on toast this time and any of you that likes can read the address, for I'm hanged if I do. Any takers?"

"Yes," jerked out another member, "I'm taking the next train back to Johnny'sburg. This is no place for us. Let's get while we have whole skins."

And so they went, sadder and wiser men, to await the bursting of the cloud that had so suddenly fallen and blotted out what they had so fondly believed to be the golden dawn of better days for the Rand.

* "Union makes strength," the motto of the South African Republic.

(To be continued.)

BRITON OR BOER?

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write a strong and exciting serial nearly **four years ago** graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

This story, coming so **soon after the Jameson Raid,** was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

It deals with how the countries fought out their final fight for the possession of the richest region of the earth and one of the fairest portions of the British Empire.

The chief characters are not fictions of the imagination, but life pictures of the very men who are now fighting.

Mr. George Griffith says: "In the romance of which the first chapters appear in *SHORT STORIES* dated Feb. 24th, I have attempted to answer in the form of an essay in prophetic fiction the question which forms the title of the story: 'Is the Briton or the Boer, the Englishman or the Dutch-Afrikander, going to rule South Africa?'"

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The Second Man Wins.

"THE country will have no able-bodied men left if this goes on. Both the Mogrows are going and I hear that——"

Elsie Banham interrupted her hostess.

"It seems to me that if a man has any special qualification which would be useful to his country, he should place it at its disposal. In fact, I'll go farther. I think every man if able and not directly wanted at home should go out."

Was it accident which made her glance at a man apparently talking to her next-door neighbour.

John Manbers had made Nathaniel's talk and admire while he was a student. Still more had he done so since, and just now his name was continually on the students' lips as almost certain to be chosen to accompany Sir James Crooner as first assistant to that eminent wound specialist, on his merciful mission to the seat of war.

Feeling just as sanguine herself about his receiving the appointment, Elsie Banham had steeled her unwilling heart and had spoken as she did to Mrs. Treller.

She knew how keen Manbers was on the appointment, and her remark, loud enough for him to hear, was meant as her encouragement to the man to whom, though he had not as yet spoken, she felt her heart was given.

Apparently, however, he had not heard or did not realise she had looked his way. He felt that there was still a chance that his claims might be passed over by the authorities in favour of Dr. Sivier, who had the advantage of John Manbers of some more years experience in surgery, and was, in fact, on the high way to very first rank in the science.

Manbers felt Sivier was his rival in the matter, but he also knew the latter was fated to be his rival and perhaps a successful one, in a matter much nearer his being. He knew that Sivier had long aspired to the hand of Elsie Banham, and he could scarcely at all tell at present whether the girl had made up her mind. She was very kind to him, and he had allowed himself to be buoyed up by a very distinct hope that some day he would win her.

Her remark had reached him in spite of his seeming indifference, and in the few subsequent moments he had made up his mind that if he could by any means whatever get to South Africa, he would do so.

His ruminations, which had begun to make his conversation drag, were interrupted by the entrance of one of the sons of the house. One of the "Natt" medicoes.

The youth only noticed his mother and Miss Banham talking as he came in, or his remark might not have been uttered at that precise moment.

"I say, mother," as he shook hands with Miss Banham, "isn't it a shame? Sivier's going out after all. They haven't given the job to Manbers. Sivier told Davis this evening that it had only just been decided. I am certain they've chosen the wrong man, for—Oh! I beg pardon, Mr. Manbers, I didn't see you. I hope——"

He stopped at a loss for words to excuse his behaviour.

Manbers, white with evident disappointment at the news, braced himself to mumble something of a reply; and as everybody began commiserating with him, he rose with a short laugh, saying he must take his leave.

He shook hands with Elsie last. The first news had disturbed her keenly in a way—she knew how anxious he had been to go. This feeling rapidly gave way to another of relief and secret joy at his not going.

She smiled as she gave him her hand, saying with the semblance of a blush:

"I suppose everybody can't go."

This could not disguise from him the fact that her former remark had conveyed to him that she would think more of him if he went out. He would not tell her so, however, and with a mere "Good-bye", he went.

For some days nothing more was heard of him save from Treller, who saw him at the hospital continually. Then—the authorities having allowed him some leave which was owing—he suddenly disappeared, to nobody's astonishment till his absence had extended to some weeks.

Sivier had gone out, but not before he had tried his luck with Elsie. She, however, with a firmness, which was perhaps not so apparent to him as it was meant to be, refused him.

He was a master of craft and noticed in his visits which became frequent as his time for going grew near, that she did not appear altogether well, that her energy had lost some of its vivacity. He, however, told himself that even if this were due to a certain affection for Manbers, it would soon be replaced by a much stronger one for himself, when he had returned with, in her eyes, the added advantage of having responded to the call of duty in South Africa.

When he had gone, and still no news of Manbers came, she began to feel that it was all a mistake, and that he had never cared for her to any degree.

Friends were useless to her; she mourned her broken

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heart in secret, and would have given anything for some occupation to take herself out of herself.

* * * * *

"Do you hear that, Sivier? They're sending all the right division forward. The chief's determined to force matters somehow, and we shall have our work cut out before night, that's certain. We're not going to occupy those hills without some awful carnage."

Sivier nodded to his chief without speaking. Doctors were bustling in and out of the temporary hospital, which was some three miles to the rear of the main column.

Everything was being done that could be done in view of an engagement which must have taken place within a few days; and now the silent bustle of the surgeons and their attendants became accentuated as the news spread that their services would be wanted earlier than was expected.

One of them stopped by Sivier, who was arranging in readiness the paraphernalia to be necessary before long in their merciful work.

"We're awfully undermanned. The staff of men and nurses wants trebling. Heaven knows how we shall get on if our men have bad luck."

"Good luck will give us our fair share," said Sivier cynically. "What's that remark somebody made about a victory being the next evil to a defeat."

Another man joined in the conversation.

"There's a batch of nurses coming within the next few hours. Ah! Sivier, there's something I wanted to tell you, but it's clean gone out of my head. I fancy it was that some man or other had been asking if you were here. Some man in the ranks of the regiment which arrived yesterday. Yes! that was it. Said he was one of the Nathaniel men, who had managed to get out, he said, in the character of a dispenser, and had worked the oracle to get to the front in the ranks. Do you know who it is?"

"Haven't the faintest notion," replied Sivier, "some poor devil of a student, I suppose, who claims acquaintance on the score of being lectured to. Can't be much good probably."

"It's good news that more nurses are due," chimed in another. "It would be all the better though, if more men had come. Any man, by the way, like your friend, for instance, would prove a god-send in odd jobs."

They separated again and the work of preparation for the casualties went on.

Fighting had commenced some time, and now that the big division on the right had gone forward, they expected they would be busy very soon.

An hour afterwards the first lot of wounded came in, and then relay after relay.

The engagement was not allowed to last long, the commander intending to continue on the morrow, so the column took up their position as far forward as they had secured.

The general sent word back of what he had done, and requested that the medical corps should assist as much as possible in fetching back the wounded —the combatant force being worn out with the rushing assault though it was comparatively short.

Most of the wounded were in, and night was coming on. Sir John Crooner, who was in charge, came to Sivier and said:

"Look here, will you go out with this last batch and make sure there are none left behind who are alive. It's going to be a bad night and we must be certain, humanly speaking, there are none left."

Sivier accordingly with some stretcher bearers and attendants went off to make the last survey of the battlefield.

Now and then when they reached the scene of action, they came across poor fellows dead to a superficial observer but with just a flicker of life left, and each was sent off to the hospital.

Sivier was walking a little ahead of the small corps. For a moment he could see no more bodies about, and then, twenty yards to the right, he caught sight of an object, which he hurried off to investigate. He was hoping this was the end of his task to get back and get some rest if possible.

He was not without a soul, but that soul was devoted to the attainment of personal aggrandisement, and much though he desired his reputation to be enhanced in his skilled treatment of the wounded, he had little or no heart to be touched at their miseries.

The small body kept on their survey of the scene some short distance away.

Coming up to the spot, Sivier turned his lantern on the apparently lifeless form lying face uppermost, limbs stretched out.

He started back with a short cry as his lantern's ray fell on the face. It was Manbers. Blood lay about his thighs, he had evidently lost a lot. The eyes were closed. Sivier recovered himself sufficiently, quickly to kneel down and feel for any signs of life without calling the attention of the bearers by his surprise.

He had been too astonished at first to have any but the instinctive thoughts of his profession, but in shorter time than it takes to tell he had realised what Manber's death would mean to him.

"Dead!—thank God!—I think," he said. "Dead!"

He was scarcely waiting to verify his opinion.

As he dropped the arm he was holding, the eyes opened and Manbers groaned.

"No—not—dead—yet," he jerked out convulsively. "That's—you, Sivier. Thank—God—someone's come. I'm—nearly—gone."

Sivier, his face perfectly colourless, gazed at him. Again for a moment he hesitated, and then a look of concentrated hate came over his face. He saw Manbers, unattended to, could not live a couple of hours, and the demoniac purpose fastened itself on his heart.

Without a word, he left his victim—he was certainly his murderer—and hurriedly went to meet the others who were now barely ten yards away, thinking that Sivier's long stay meant they were wanted.

Speaking rapidly, and finding time to feel thankful his face could not be seen in the darkness, he said:

"It's all right, the poor fellow's dead. I thought at first not, but he's quite gone."

Unsuspecting, they retraced their steps to the rear and reported that, as far as they could see, no living were left.

Arrived at the hospital, Sivier buried himself in his work of attending those wounded wanting care, and tried to forget.

He took no notice of surroundings. It was perhaps fortunate the others were too much engaged to notice his appearance.

An hour afterwards, he was preparing to leave off his work, and seek some relief in sleep of some sort.

As he left the improvised ward, two of the other men walked behind him. One of them called to Sivier.

"Those new nurses have come you noticed, I suppose. Did you hear about one of them. She was bathing the head of a poor fellow of the Brentshires, when he caught

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sight of the fellow in the next bed who was only slightly wounded, and he asked whether somebody or other had come in. He said the poor fellow had been shot endeavouring to rescue the speaker. The nurse recognised the name and fainted. She had evidently expected this man was all right and knew him, or else she did not know he was attached to this column. Anyhow they brought her to and she asked for particulars and now she's missing. They imagine she's gone to find out for herself. The other man was able to tell pretty well where it took place."

Sivier showed little interest—in fact had apparently taken no notice of the details, and his answer showed that the tale had not excited his interest at all.

"The Colonel's sent out a party to find her, or I'd go myself," said the first man. As they left the ward, the searchers arrived. Though a moment before, Sivier's existence had been a mere ordinary detail to the two speakers, one of them has said he will never as long as he lives forget Sivier's face as they encountered the party.

It has been surmised that the nurse who had really intentionally obtained an appointment to the identical column Manbers was in, was Elsie Banham.

The news of his injury, perhaps death, was an awful shock to the poor girl, but Providence had guided her steps, and the search party had found her holding his head in her lap and tearfully waiting for help which she knew would come.

Poor Manbers was too far gone to tell her sufficient particulars of Sivier's treachery, but the latter's terrible discomfiture as he met them told her quite enough.

"My God!" he exclaimed, as the awful thought went through him that Manbers was still alive.

He tried to tear himself away from the group, but not before the half-glazed eyes of Manbers met his, and he knew instinctively that all was known.

In the weeks of terrible uncertainty to Elsie that preceeded Manbers' recovery, they were not told the reason for the shot which roused the camp on that first night of their meeting, or of the discovery next day that Sivier, whose professional career had been so brilliant, had put an end to his own life.

S. B.

THE SAVING OF GUN No. 5.

It was "Gun No. 5" in Smith's Battery, but we of the 2nd Brigade always spoke of it as "Shuman's Gun." We did so because Shuman was sergeant of the third section of the battery, and because we came to know him well, along with many of the other gunners, before his gun had fired a hostile shot. It was a rifled nine-pounder, the same as all others, but for some reason it had a voice peculiarly its own. With thirty guns playing to right and left we could pick out No. 5 without a miss.

At First Bull Run it was the Sixth Regiment which supported and saved Smith's Battery from capture, and it was Company "H" which lay in line directly behind No. 5. That was the battery's first fight—our first fight—and there were good reasons for one to be proud of the other. The enemy came charging and yelling three different times, and each time, as they neared the guns, the artillerists fell flat and we rose up and poured in a volley which cumbered the earth with dead and wounded. In the last charge they reached Shuman's gun and began to drag it away. Only Shuman and two or three gunners were left. When the sergeant saw that his gun had been captured, he sprang up with a wild, desperate look on his face and cried out to us:

"They've got my gun, boys—they've got my gun! Rally, Company 'H,' for your honour's sake, rally and get it back."

And with our captain crying "Halt!" at the top of his voice, and with the brigadier cursing and storming that we should move without orders, we dashed forward as one man. There was only a sputtering of musketry before we were upon them. Then it was the bayonet and clubbed musket—even the fist. In five minutes we had heaped them up or driven them off, and the gun was recaptured. At Second Bull Run, as the Sixth was extended in battle line, Company "H" just fitted into a gap into a half destroyed stone wall. The gallant Kearney had fallen at Chantilly, and the blue masses had been slowly crowded back to the old battle ground. As regiments and brigades fell back, the feet of living men kicked aside the skulls and crushed the bones of the dead of months before. Exultant and implacable, the grey masses followed, and there was desperate fighting over that vast graveyard.

"There they come—get ready—here is where we roll 'em back!"

As a regiment in grey moved straight on for the gap, while other regiments moved upon the flanks, Company "H" poured in its fire and defied death. It beat back the regiment—ten to one—once—twice—thrice. Then it was decimated—and more. Of ninety-five men, only sixty could handle a musket.

"I can't spare a man! You must die where you are!" replied the brigadier when asked for reinforcements.

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The sixty men were reduced to fifty-five—to fifty—to forty, and we were yet holding the gap and holding the enemy when there was a hip-hurrah from the rear and up came "Shuman's Gun" on the full gallop.

No care for the dead—no care for the wounded. The gun swung into position and unlimbered, and Shuman's voice was heard above the crash of battle shouting:

"Down on your faces, Company 'H'—I'm going to use canister!"

It was but a single gun from the battery—but it was Shuman's gun—and as we fell on our faces the wicked missiles pinged and screamed above us and shrivelled up the head of the advancing column as fire destroys a dry bush.

The gunners worked with bullets flying about them as thick as leaves falling of an autumn day, and the gun held the gap and saved a brigade. And, though the whole army was pressed back and the foe gained another victory, those of us who lived laid our grimy hands on gun or wheel and accepted it as a comrade.

When Hooker went down into the wilderness to flank Lee out of Fredericksburg, the Second Brigade was with him, and Company "H" gathered wild flowers by the wayside and in the forest and made wreaths to hang upon the muzzle of Shuman's gun.

We were in the path of Stonewall Jackson as he advanced silently through the woods in the dusk of the evening and fell like a thunderbolt on the Federal army.

Surprised and panic stricken, we gave way and became fugitives, and of the artillery Shuman's gun was almost one of the first pieces captured. The sergeant fell back with us, crying and wringing his hands, as men do when death has taken all they love.

"They've got No. 5, boys—they've got my dear old gun!" he kept wailing, and we could say nothing to comfort him.

For half an hour it looked like a rout of the whole army. Then the Federals halted in their tracks and turned at bay. Shuman was still with us, and of a sudden he swung his hat and cheered and exclaimed:

"Don't you hear her, boys—old No. 5! There she goes again! The rebs have got her, but she's right ahead of us and we'll have her again!"

And above the crash and the roar we caught the peculiar tones of Shuman's gun, and Company "H" cheered and pressed forward until it became a wedge for the brigade. Yes, down there at the edge of the forest, where we had cut down a few score of trees as an abattis, the enemy were using old No. 5 against us. It was the weakest spot in their line.

A thousand men seemed to define the fact at once, and paying no heed to orders, a thousand men pressed forward. But Company "H" was first of all. Shuman's gun was the magnet. We leaped over the wounded and dead—we cheered and shouted—we dashed forward and the gun was ours.

And when it was ours again we hugged it and called it pet names, and we cared so little for the cyclone of death sweeping over those fields that we lifted the sergeant up and paraded him around. Hooker was driven back in disgrace, but we sang songs as we marched back to the river. We had not been defeated—we had retaken old No. 5.

There came a day, before Grant marched down over the same highways in search of the same old gray lion, when Sergeant Shuman was commissioned lieutenant. He had earned his promotion and more, but he would not accept it. As sergeant he would be in charge of No. 5. As lieutenant he would be in charge of a section.

And, too, there came a day when the overworked guns were ordered to be turned over and new ones issued. A piece of artillery is not like a man. When it has been fired about so many times the metal is weakened. When Company "H" heard of that order every man talked mutiny, and the crew of No. 5 were ready to desert. We went to our captain, and he to the colonel, and somehow it was fixed to keep No. 5 in the battery. Gun and caisson showed fifty-two scars of bullet and ball, and every spoke of the wheels had been stained with blood over and over again.

Shuman's gun was with us as we fought to the right or left at Petersburg, seeking to break through and seize the railroads; but when Grant finally settled down to wear out the foe we made a discovery and had to admit an unpleasant fact.

Old No. 5 had seen her best days. In her last fight her shot and shell had not been true, and grape and canister had dribbled from her muzzle. Even Sergeant Shuman sorrowfully admitted that she had been strained by the hundreds of discharges, and that the next one fired might kill friend instead of foe.

And one day, the order to turn in the old field pieces was reissued, and we bowed our heads and realized that we were helpless. The gun must go to the foundry to be broken up and come back to us in new form, and we gathered around it to say good-bye. There was tenderness and gentleness and love in the way we smoothed the scarred metal—in our touch of spoke and tire and box.

"How she spoke to 'em at Antietam!" whispered one.

"And how she moved 'em at Second Bull Run!" added a second.

"And she was red hot at Gettysburg!" put in a third.

And old No. 5 stood there ready to be hauled away to the boneyard, and of her crew only Shuman was left alive. He had seen five full crews bite the dust since that gun fired its first shot.

"They are coming for the gun—where's Shuman?"

He knew the gun was to go away that afternoon, and as he leaned against it with eyes fixed on the earth at his feet no man disturbed him. We knew he was remembering the hard fought battles—the critical minutes of the desperate charge—the flames which had leaped from that black throat to blast advancing men.

"Where's Shuman—call Shuman!"

No one had seen him for two or three hours. Men passed up and down calling his name, and the corporal who had come with four horses to drag the gun to the landing understood our feelings and waited.

By-and-bye a soldier who had been searching about came back to the gun and said:

"Thanks, corporal, but you may take it along now."

"But Shuman—wait for Shuman!" we protested.

"You need not wait. He is lying dead down there in his tent!"

And the men about the gun uncovered their heads and cast down their eyes, and drooping his voice to a whisper the corporal said:

"Start her up easy, boys, and pick out the best road. So the old gun goes, and Shuman goes, and I'll be blowed if it isn't a queer deal!"

M. Quad.

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WHEN Charlie Briggs came rushing into my room one night in December a few years ago, I must confess that I noticed a strange look in his eyes, and an unwonted fire in his speech and conduct altogether; yet I paid no heed to these things, for I knew—or thought I knew—my man. As events have proved, I was wrong, but I do not think anybody else, knowing Charlie as I did, would have acted differently. He was a rather excitable, moody chap—full of foolish fancies and strange ideas. I recall the fact that when we sat round the fire in the old days at the club and told stories, it was Charlie who excited our feelings by the most blood-curdling tales imaginable, accompanying the narration by such extravagance of gesture and passion that it was with a sigh of relief that we heard the *dénouement*, and saw him sink back in his seat, exhausted. When, therefore, he came into my room with his whole frame pulsating wildly with excitement, I merely motioned him to a seat and passed him my cigar case.

He took out a cigar, bit the end of it off, and then commenced to strike matches and throw them into the fire unused, while he chewed his cigar with a grim eagerness.

"Tom!" he exclaimed at last, "do you remember our talk the other day about heredity and all that sort of thing?"

"I don't recollect," said I.

"Well, I've been reading that bally French author—I forget his name—and I'm thoroughly convinced that there's something in it after all. Why, he gives instances where people have committed cold-blooded murders, not because they wanted to, but just because they couldn't help it, it ran in their blood. The notion takes my fancy. Just think of a man going up to his wife or his friend and committing murder, just because it's in him and he can't help himself. I tell you what, the law ought to be altered to meet such cases. A fellow is merely the instrument of Providence, as it were. He can't help himself, he merely obeys an instinct that is inherent in his being. What do you think, old man?"

"Well," I replied quietly, "it's a rum subject, and not congenial to me. If you weren't so serious I should say you had had a Scotch or two to-night."

"Oh, rot!" he exclaimed. "You fellows always turn my ideas into fun. Why can't you——"

"Your ideas!" I interjected. "Like your cheek! It's the French—What's-his-name's ideas."

"I tell you what, young man," said Charlie, oracularly, "I admit that chap has started the idea in my brain but——" here he paused and clenched his hands—"I can give him points. He has mooted the thing, but I can see deeper than he ever did. I am a living example of heredity! Oh, don't laugh—what I am telling you is right."

"Where do you mean to lecture on the subject?" I asked banteringly.

"What I'm telling you is gospel, on my honour, Tom," he went on, stalking the room as he spoke. "I have given some thought to the matter. It seems to me that whilst a man may live as harmlessly as a dove up to a certain age, he may suddenly realise his responsibility to his ancestors, so to speak. You see, what is inbred, what is in a man's heart, will be sure to work itself out. What is the name of that yarn—oh, I forget—it doesn't matter—something about what's bred in the bone. Now listen. I've come to give you advice. As sure as I'm a living sinner, it will do you good. When you hear of a murder or anything of that sort, don't you go and blame the fellow in every case."

"Much obliged to you," I answered.

"You don't take me seriously," he protested. "I assure you, what I've told you is true. Believe it or not, I tell you I'm a living example of—Now, look here, Tom—quick! See my face? Doesn't that convince you?"

I glanced at his face, which was almost unrecognisable.

"Horrible!" I yelled at him. "Get out, you silly ass!"

In an instant he was himself again.

"Now, at certain times of the day I feel like making that mess of my features," he said. "Of course it's no pleasure to me to do it. I simply *must*."

"Well, all I can say is that if you must, don't come here with that ugly—I beg pardon, Charlie——" I hesitated, for a shade of annoyance had appeared on his face. "I mean, old man, don't honour me by a visit when you've got 'em coming on you."

"Tell me," he said eagerly, "what did my face look like just then?"

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I examined his countenance steadily for a few seconds. No—he was not joking. The fellow was quite serious.

"You looked like—well, I can't tell you. Go out and have a Scotch."

"All right," he exclaimed, seizing his hat and going out.

I met him the next evening at the club—not the old one—but a more sedate one where the fellows talked about art and literature, and kindred subjects. We didn't tell blood curdlers there.

As soon as he caught sight of me, he ran to my side, and, shaking my hand heartily, exclaimed: "What rubbish did I favour you with last night, old man?"

"Oh, you talked the merest nonsense," I answered.

"You must forgive me," he said imploringly. "Take no notice of it—there's a good chap. I wasn't myself."

"No, you weren't yourself," I laughed, "and it's a good thing, too, for if you had been, I should have kicked you out! But, as it is, I always carry a loaded revolver on my person. The precaution is necessary when one associates with victims of heredity."

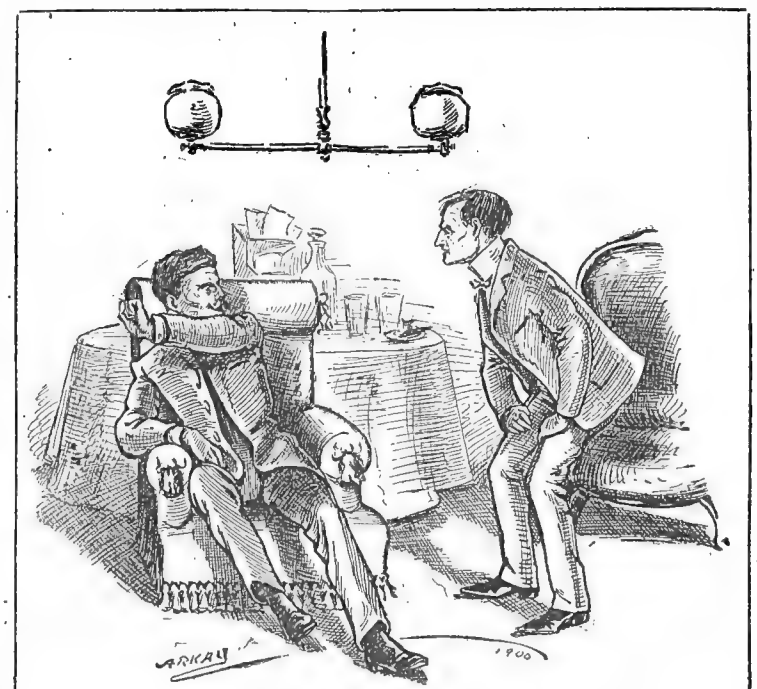
When I mentioned the weapon I thought his face grew hard and he bit his lips, but when I had finished, he appealed to me thus:

"Oh, don't be a fool — forgive me, won't you?"

"Certainly, my dear boy," said I, and the incident dropped. Shortly afterwards, we went out for a stroll. It was a fine, breezy night; the air was hard and cold; the moon raced across the heavens, and the street lamps shone through a haze of fog. Had we walked slowly, we must have been numbed with cold, for the frost bit to the bone, but we were young and impulsive, and covered the ground quickly.

On the Thames Embankment we paused for a moment and surveyed the shivering group of half-starved men and women, who were huddled together like a flock of sheep.

"Poor devils!" said Charlie, gazing at them. "Heaven only knows how they suffer. Born into a life where there is nothing but death for them. Death for their hopes—their poor, half-starved brats—and, presently, death for their own bodies. Just consider. These poor beggars never know what it is to smoke a cigar or gush over a book, or go to the theatre. Ugh! what a life!"



"Horrible!" I yelled at him. "Get out, you silly ass!"

As soon as Charlie started talking, the difficulty was to get him to stop. He was at all times a brilliant conversationalist, but I think he excelled himself that night. He rose to the heights previously unattainable. His flights of rhetoric still linger in my ears like an oft-recurring dream. I can hear him quote poetry by the canto, dwelling on the strongest parts like a child lingers over the name of the hero in a fable. If I had known what had happened before he met me that evening, I think I should still have admired him, only in that case it would be the sort of admiration which is compelled, not drawn—the fascination of the serpent that is ready to strike.

He seemed fresher, more buoyant than I had ever known him, and capable of saying something interesting about everything we saw. His fancy seemed heightened—freed from the dull influence of the body—and, as he talked, there passed before my mind's eye pictures of life in its broader aspects—life in climates that froze man to the marrow, or scorched his skin like parchment.

Death, that phantom of the night, posed before me for an instant, too, dark, and black-robed as usual. If Charlie could have sat down, and committed to paper the thoughts of his brain that night, the world of books would have been enriched.

We hailed a cab, and drove through crowded London. Away in the busy thoroughfares, the pulses beat quicker, the traffic moved to a livelier tune, and the scenes in my mental panorama shifted with ever increasing rapidity.

"What a number of people there are in London!" remarked Charlie rather insipidly after a silence which succeeded one of his loftiest flights.

"Yes," said I; and then I added, for sheer devilment, "Plenty for you to choose from."

I felt his grip on my arm grow tighter.

"What do you mean?" he said sharply.

"Oh," I said, "the other night you were talking of obeying the behests of your ancestors."

He made no reply to this sally, and just at the moment an incident occurred which diverted my thoughts. The newsboys were crying out something in their best style, and, judging from the vehemence with which the words were distributed, something extraordinary had occurred.

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Wondering whether we were at war with a European coalition, or what other startling event had taken place, I leaned out and signalled to an urchin to bring me one.

"Last edition, sir!" cried the boy. "Horful murder in town! 'Scape of the miscreant!"

We stopped, and I purchased a paper.

I was about to open it when Charlie said "Don't be a fool! Why do you want to read that thing here?"

"Why not?" I said, wonderingly.

"You seem in a desperate hurry to read of the decease of one of your kind!" he growled, sulkily.

I took no notice of him, however, but went on reading. It appeared that a horrible murder had been committed in the open street in broad daylight that evening. The victim was a gentleman who was standing in his door, when a well-dressed man, in a brown suit, had rushed at him with the ferocity of a tiger, and smashed his skull with a loaded stick, or something of that nature.

Reeking with blood, the victim fell against the door, and the murderer, possessed by a thirst for blood, paused and drove a knife into the prostrate body up to the hilt, and then fled.

Despite all the efforts of Scotland Yard, the murderer was still at large, and the greatest indignation was felt by the populace.

I offered to read the paragraph out to Charlie, but he refused almost angrily, explaining that he never read a paper in the street.

"You shall read it at my place if you like, old man," he said, presently, when he was, apparently, in a better temper. "You'll come to supper with me, won't you?"

"I don't mind," I answered, and shortly afterwards we pulled up at his place in Grafton Square.

"Nice to have the house all to oneself, isn't it?" said Charlie, when we were seated indoors. "My landlady, bless her heart, has gone away for the day, and I'm all alone in my glory. Do you like sauce?"

"No thanks," said I.

"Do you know," said Charlie after supper, "I think you shall read that out to me now. I like to hear of such crimes, and I'll tell you why. We hear a lot of talk about the physical degeneration of the race, and all that sort of thing. Well, when a murder is committed it shows that the virility of the race is still existent. You see, it takes a bit of muscle and nerve to kill anybody. I've often thought, when reading an account of a brilliant bayonet charge by our fellows, what brutes they must be. Fancy an officer cutting a man's head off, or slashing the sword through flesh and sinew, and, shortly afterwards, coming home to a drawing-room and acting the gentleman! Why, it's a brutal game, take it at its best. Of course, mind you, if we hadn't the men to do it, we should be in a queer street, and it shows that the race is not losing fighting power. At the same time, what I'm trying to show is that physical ascendancy is a brutal and an ungodly thing."

"There may be something in what you say," I replied shortly.

"Now old man," said he, leaning back in his chair and smoking hard, "start away."

"What?" said I.

"Read that murder case out to me," said Charlie.

"Oh, I don't think I will, old chap," I answered. "The fact is, I don't like such gruesome details, and the subject is not pleasant. I'm afraid I'm a chicken-hearted fellow, Charlie."

"Oh, hang that!" he exclaimed. "Read it!"

"Excuse me," I answered; "I don't think you'd enjoy it."

"I know you're a chicken-hearted fellow," said Charlie, rising from his seat, "and that's the very reason why you *shall* read it. Start away!"

"Did you say *shall* read it?" I inquired; "because, if you did, you're forgetting yourself! I shall not read it!"

Charlie crossed the room at a bound.

"By Heaven! you shall read it!" he cried, his eyes dancing before me like burning coals.

I rose from my seat and faced him. His face was perspiring freely, and his hands were shaking with excitement.

"Sit down, old man," I said quietly; "you want a little drop of Scotch."

"Tom, you hear me," he cried. "I'll have that paper read! Your will is nothing to mine. I'm your master, this is my house, and I'll have my own way here!"

"You must be joking," said I. "Really, the joke has gone far enough. I know your penchant for practical jokes, but this is surely too much."

"Don't drive me to desperation, Tom," he cried, holding himself back with some difficulty. "Read it!"

"Look here,

Slashing the sword through flesh and sinew.

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Charlie," I said. "I know what a joke is and I understand a joker. But I give you fair warning. If you come a foot nearer I shall hit you between the eyes."

"What!" he roared, taking off his coat hurriedly. "You'll hit me! Why, I'll lay you out in two minutes!"

I did not take off my coat, but stood on the defensive.

"What is the matter with the man?" I exclaimed, and at that instant he startled me by shouting at the top of his voice: "I'll teach you to defy me! I've killed one man to-day, and I'm going to finish you this night!"

My head swam for just an instant, as I glanced at his clothes, and saw that they were brown — the same as described in the paper.

I strove to collect my scattered senses, and face the situation calmly.

I beat him down again, until I was sick of the work.

I was unarmed, whereas, doubtless, he had the knife I looked at his face and saw murder written there in plain letters.

He dashed the table out of his path and came rushing for me. I saw the glitter of steel. My hands flew instinctively to the nearest chair. I picked it up and swung it as he came, catching him full on the head and sending him down with a great clatter. He struggled to rise, but I beat him down again until I was sick of the work.

Ten minutes from the time he commenced I had him bound and helpless. I went out and sought a policeman. A tall man came up to the door.

"Have you seen a policeman about?" I asked.

"I'm a detective," he said. "Can I come in?"

I brought him in and showed him Charlie.

"I've been watching this house all the evening," he remarked. "I had suspicion, but could not take any decisive step without having more ground to work upon."

He stooped and felt in Charlie's pockets.

"Here's another knife, and there's blood on it," he said, drawing out a red-stained knife. "This is the one he used, no doubt."

Poor Charlie was hanged.

F. Steebner.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT THE WAR.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Fortune's Sport," by Mrs Williamson, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. James Chapman, Off Dewsbury Road, Hunslet, Leeds. Attempts for this week's prize should deal with WAR ANECDOTES and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, February 26th. Post-cards only, please.

Not Enough Regret.

A DRILL instructor, who was the terror of every recruit, and the remorseless tyrant of the awkward squad, was putting a firing party through the funeral exercise. Having opened the ranks so as to admit the passage of the supposed cortège between them, the instructor ordered the men to rest on their arms reversed. Then, by way of practical explanation, he walked slowly down the lane formed by the two ranks, saying as he did so:

"Now, I am the corpse. Pay attention."

Having reached the end of the party, he turned round, regarded them steadily with scrutinising eye for a moment or two, and then remarked, in a somewhat solemn tone of voice:

"Your hands are right, and your heads are right, but you haven't got that look of regret that you ought to have." J. C.

A Steel Monopoly.

A COMPANY of an Irish regiment, now serving in South Africa, were fighting their way hand-to-hand through a village against stubborn resistance.

One man who had bayoneted his opponent, after vainly endeavouring to extract his bayonet, as a last resource, hurriedly placed a cartridge in his rifle and practically shot the man off.

One of the civil officers close by turned to him and expostulated with him for what he considered his brutality.

"Well, sor," replied the Irishman unabashed, looking round at his comrades in the thick of the fray, "I can't have this one man monopolising of my bayonet."

C. R. F.

Archbishop Temple and the Pink Bedroom.

ARCHBISHOP TEMPLE on one occasion was entertained by a clergyman during the absence of the clergyman's wife. On leaving, the host politely expressed the hope that when next his lordship honoured the house Mrs. Temple would accompany him.

"No, thanks," the Archbishop laconically replied, "Mrs. Temple doesn't like roughing it."

The clergyman's feelings were deeply hurt, and he unburdened his soul to his wife on her return.

"Why, my dear," she exclaimed, "you didn't surely put the Bishop in the pink bedroom, did you?"

It appeared that he had.

"Oh, then, that's it! I put all the plate in that bed." W. E. T.

"Which One?"

A CLERGYMAN, who is a prison chaplain, tells the following good story about one of the prisoners:

"I entered the cell of a prisoner," said the chaplain, "a hardened-looking man, with a countenance not exactly beatific.

"'Ah, my good man,' I said, 'what would your poor wife say did she know you were here? But perhaps she knows of your terrible position?'"

"'Which one do you mean, guv'nor?' said the convict. 'I'm in for bigamy—hitched on to four of them!'"

T. A. W.

A Yeomanry Anecdote.

To show the relative positions in life of members of yeomanry corps the following anecdote may be cited:

A regiment in the North on permanent duty were going recently through their movements when a private, not suiting his sergeant, the latter was reprimanded with:

"Private Jackson, if you don't pay more attention I shall report you."

The private rejoined:

"Aye, du it if thou dare, an' aw'll raise the' thy rent."

The effect may be imagined. J. C.

A Compromise.

AN ardent disciple of vegetarianism advertised recently for a servant, and stated that preference would be given to a girl willing to devote herself to the vegetarian creed of her mistress.

One shrewd applicant for the situation said:

"Well, ma'am, it's like this. I'm a Wesleyan myself, but I'm not what you'd call prejudiced against the Vegetarians, and I don't mind attending the Vegetarian Church once on a Sunday to please you!" W. C.

He Went.

NOT long ago a practical jokist conceived the idea of frightening passers through a country churchyard by dressing himself up as a ghost.

One night, about half-past eleven, a burly old farmer was coming along, when out jumped the apparition.

"Well, who are you?" asked the agriculturist.

The ghost wailed forth some sentence ending with "ghost."

"Now, look here," said the farmer, as he began to drop across him with a stick, "you clear off. It is time all you confounded ghosts were in bed."

The ghost went. E. N.

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Shot by an "Ad."

At the time of the Maori War a friend of mine had a strange experience.

The publishing office of a local newspaper was close to the scene of some of the hottest fighting.

During the struggle the Maoris ran short of ammunition for their guns, and, raiding the newspaper offices, charged their guns with type and stereo-blocks.

This novel ammunition proved very effective. One of the white invaders was severely wounded with a patent medicine advertisement, another was crippled for life by a church bazaar announcement, and the editor, who had taken refuge with the British troops, had a narrow escape of being hit with one of his own poems!

E. M.

He Shifted.

A cabby was one day standing by his cab, when a Johnnie came up and stood quizzing at it, and the following conversation took place:

Johnnie: "Is that your cab?"

Cabby: "Yes."

Johnnie: "I thought it was a cats'-meat barrow."

Cabby: "And so will a lot more people if they see puppies smelling around. You will oblige me by shifting."

H. E. H.

A Problem for the Police.

An American correspondent gives the following as an example of the rigid formality with which the officials in some parts of Russia act:

Russian Official: "You can't stay in this country, sir."

Traveller: "Then I'll leave it."

Official: "Have you a permit to leave?"

Traveller: "No, sir."

Official: "Then you cannot go. I give you twenty-four hours to make up your mind as to what you shall do."

F. H.

A Man and His Wife.

An old story in a new guise is sent in by a reader.

A man was seen leaving his model dwelling, while from the window above his wife poured after him ceaseless volleys of what is politely known as "langwidge." But in the enthusiasm of her eloquence, she leaned out too far and fell on to the pavement. A horrified spectator hurried after the husband with the news. As he was breaking it, the man, with a face full of suppressed feeling, murmured, "Don't make me laugh; I've got a cracked lip."

W. P.

The Time to Get Married.

They were talking about the Scriptures, and, of course, her knowledge of the Bible was proper and more accurate than his.

"In the Bible," said she, "one can find directions for conduct in all the circumstances of life."

"I'm afraid I can't accept that proposition," said he.

"Why not?"

"Well, does it tell one when to get married?"

"It says that now is the accepted time," replied she demurely. Subsequent events proved that she was right.

H. W. W.

Burst from Bondage (a Novel).

He was immured in the darkest dungeon beneath the castle moat.

"If I had only a saw, a file—anything," he moaned as he looked at the solid bars across the solitary window.

Then an idea struck him.

His face brightened up like a warehouse conflagration.

Rapidly running over his supply of collars which had just come from the laundry, he selected one fitted for his purpose.

Five minutes later the great middle bar of the window, dexterously severed by the sawlike edge of the laundered collar, fell apart.

He was free!

E. E. H.

All She Required.

A certain shopwalker in a large establishment is noted for his severity to those under him in business. One day he approached a junior assistant from whose counter a lady had just moved away.

"You let that lady go without making a purchase?" he asked severely.

"Yes, sir, I——"

"And she was at your counter fully ten minutes?"

"Doubtless, but then you see——"

"Exactly. I saw that, in spite of all the questions she put to you, you rarely answered her, and never attempted to get what she wanted."

"Well, but——"

"I shall report your carelessness."

"Well, I hadn't what she wanted."

"What was that?"

"Half-a-crown. She's a book canvasser, getting subscribers to the 'Life of Moses.'"

And the shopwalker retired crestfallen.

W. E.

Character Not Good.

In some rural districts of England there are held annually hiring fairs, where farmers and others attend to engage servants.

At one held in Gloucestershire last autumn a farmer opened negotiations with a lad who seemed suitable for his purpose. Various questions having been asked and answered, the farmer inquired at last:

"Hast got a character from thy last place?"

"No," replied the boy; "but my old gaffer be about somewhere, and I can get he to write I one."

"Very well," was the reply, "thee get it and meet I here again at four o'clock."

The time came, so did the farmer and the boy.

"Hast got thy character?" was the query.

The answer came short and sharp:

"No; but I ha' got thine, and I bean't a-coming."

D. S. H.

The Boers' Irish Brigade.

A corporal in the Scots' Fusiliers, writing to his brother in Coventry from Frere Camp, says:

"Just before the battle the Irish Brigade (Boers' side) sent a note to our Dublin Fusiliers saying that they would be glad to get the opportunity to wipe them (the Dublin Fusiliers) off the face of the earth; but the note was returned by the Dublins to say that they would walk through the Irish Brigade as the devil did through Athlone."

M. J.

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BARTY'S BOLD VENTURE.

THE Rev. Marsden Tracey rang the bell violently:

"James, summon the servants into this room at once."

"All of 'em, sir?"

"Yes, all of them. And James, are there any others in the kitchen?"

"Only Sir Reginald's coachman, and Mr. Austley's groom, sir."

"Send them here as well."

In a few minutes a somewhat disorderly procession, blinking with astonishment, straggled into the room, headed by James the white-haired butler, and brought up in the rear by the odd boy, whose whimsical face was sicklied over with a look of dismay.

"My dear," continued the vicar, speaking to his wife, "will you request Miss Macalister to join us. If Mary is not asleep, she must do without her nurse for a time." Then he turned to a lady of striking appearance, and said: "Madame, may I ask you to summon Annette?"

"No! No!" she began, with an excited gesture, "there is no need to send for Annette, dear sir; she has been with me for twenty years, and I will answer for——"

"Pardon me, madame," interrupted the vicar in a decisive tone, "but she must be present."

In response to a call, a tall, thin woman of foreign air, and with a nose so large that it was a limb rather than a feature, came into the room. As soon as she entered, the vicar locked the door, and put the key in his pocket.

"A very serious thing has happened," he said. "Madame Benedetti has lost her diamond cross, the gift of the Emperor, Alexander the Second."

Sir Reginald lifted his eyebrows, and a low murmur of consternation came from the assembled domestics.

"Madame tells me that she promised to show it and other of her presents, to the ladies after dinner. For this reason her maid left it in its case on the dressing-table, and when she came up for it after dinner, discovered that it was no longer in the room.

"Someone must have taken it during the time we were at dinner, or soon after. Can any of you offer any explanation as to its disappearance?"

"I don't think anyone in the kitchen could have took it, sir," said the kindly old cook; "we haven't had a minute to spare to go upstairs if we wanted."

"Speak for yourself, Mary," said her master sharply. "Again I ask, can anyone explain this matter? because with the permission of my guests, I propose to have every inmate of the house at the present time searched. As no one speaks, may I beg you, madame, as the one person beyond suspicion, to put on your cloak and go to the police, which is just above this house, and desire Inspector Walsh and his wife to come here at once."

We looked at each other in bewilderment, not unmixed with suspicion. A short time before we had been honoured guests—now we were apparently under police surveillance.

Until this sudden transition, the dinner-party had been a brilliant success. The vicar had been quite at his best. Musician, novelist and parish priest, with an unrivalled acquaintance with the foibles of men and women, he had maintained his reputation as one of the most entertaining men in England.

But the bright, particular star of the evening was his friend, the famous cantatrice Madame Benedetti—most seraphic of singers and most good natured of women. She had promised to sing for us, and so anxious were we to listen to that superb voice, that when the mystic nod had been given by Mrs. Tracey, which is the signal that sends the female fleet sailing out of the room, we had not hesitated to follow at once to the drawing-room.

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Trained to observe the faces of people, I had noticed a change in Madame Benedetti's expression upstairs. She looked concerned and annoyed, and subsequent events showed that her countenance faithfully reflected her feelings. She had discovered the loss of those famous diamonds which were as familiar to concert-goers as the ample form upon which they rested.

In due course madame returned, accompanied by Inspector Walsh and his diminutive wife. One by one the guests were taken into the smoke-room or the library, and as the footman expressed it, "were turned inside out." Then, in their turn, the servants had to submit their persons to a rigorous search. A kitchen-maid promptly went into hysterics, declaring herself to be as innocent of the theft as that metaphorical personage the "babe unborn." Mr. Austley's groom, too, showed a suspicious unwillingness to yield himself to the inquisitive fingers of the Inspector; but the investigation revealed nothing more detrimental to his credit than half a roasted chicken.

The precious stones remaining undiscovered, other police were introduced into the house, and all its chambers and appurtenances were subjected to the most vigorous scrutiny. Even the bed-chamber to which my patient, Miss Forrest—the consumptive niece of Mrs. Tracy, had been confined during the day by illness, was not exempt from a careful search.

Many curious things came to light, but not the diamond cross. That magnificent piece of jewellery, valued at six thousand pounds, which had marked the admiration of the Emperor of All the Russias for the genius of Madame Benedetti, had disappeared as completely as though the brilliants had burnt themselves up in the light of their own sparkling.

By the vicar's advice, a reward of one hundred pounds was offered for information which should lead to the conviction of the thief. Still nothing was heard, and in two or three weeks more, the sensation of the hour had passed into the limbo of forgotten things.

About two months after this piece of excitement, as I drove in from the country, I noticed that Blind Barty's pitch was vacant: yet it was Saturday evening—his busiest time. The weather, too, was eminently suited to the calling of a mendicant, but Barty's wizened little figure and unshaven face—not omitting the moving legend he wore suspended round his neck—were nowhere to be seen. As his medical adviser, and as one well acquainted with his habits, I wondered what had become of him.

Although Barty could not *look* on the wine when it was red, he knew its taste particularly well. Once in his cups, he had walked off the quay into the river, and had been with difficulty rescued and resuscitated. With unconscious humour he ascribed his mis-chance to the fact that the riverside was "badly lighted." At various times, while "on the spree" as his wife called it, he had fallen down an area, been run over by a green-grocer's cart, and collided with innumerable lamp posts. Many and dishonourable scars attested the number and variety of his injuries and escapades.

Fearing lest he had come to grief, I alighted from my dog-cart, and made my way along the narrow street in which he lived. As I drew near his cottage, the door opened, and a small boy darting out, headed with precipitate swiftness in the direction of the police-station. From the interior of the house came a loud, thick bellowing, mingled with voices of wailing and lamentation. As I came up to his house I saw a boot come through a window, narrowly missing a spectator's head. The blind man was busy, pelting his family circle with any minor article of furniture which came readily to hand, while his curses would have brought a blush to the face of the Foul Fiend Himself.

These disturbances were not unusual, poverty or riches would produce them. If his harvest of coppers had been abnormally plentiful, or if the British public had passed his money-box unheedingly by—in either case he was apt to become riotous, and show a reckless disregard for his household goods.

To-night, Barty appeared to be entering into the festivities with more than usual zest. As I entered, a piece of coal struck the wall near me, and exploded like a shell. He turned fiercely towards me, and then began to grope for another lump of coal with which to salute what he took to be the constable who usually ministered to him on these occasions.

At the sound of my voice he ceased his labours, and allowed himself to be led to his seat by the fireside. Turning his sightless eyes in my direction, he said: "It ain't drink this time, Doctor."

"Well, what is it this time," I demanded sternly—"madness—or have you come into a fortune?"

"That's just it, Doctor," he said, rising in his excitement, and standing with his hands grasping the arms of his chair: "I 'ave come into a fortune. I've nobbled the one hundred pounds! Yes: the whole bloomin' lot! I feels that pleased that I must do something."

Then I understood the meaning of Blind Barty's demonstrations.

"Man!" I burst out, "is this really true?"

"The Inspector said the money was as good as in my pocket," he replied. "Besides," Barty went on convincingly, "she has confessed."

"She?" I ejaculated, and my mind reverted immediately to the woman of the immense nose, and of the eyes set closely together. I had distrusted her from the first.

"Tell me all about it."

Barty drew a packet of cigarettes from his pocket, and I waited with the utmost impatience whilst the blind man selected his weed, and proceeded to destroy the scientific theory that the *raison d'être* of smoking lies in being able to see the curling fumes.

"I'm just thinkin', doctor, what a wise chap I was to keep my own counsel," and he gave a nod worthy of Lord Burleigh.

"There's no need to keep it now," I said: "go on."

He gave a grin which displayed his sunken gums to the worst possible advantage, and went on:

"You remember the night of the Vicar's dinner-party, sir?"

"I have every reason to do so," I answered.

"It was a Friday, at the tail end of October, and a cold, damp evening with falling sleet. I was late that night, and chilled to the bone. Although it was after nine o'clock, my boy George hadn't come to take me home, and I was trying to keep myself warm with thoughts of how I should punch that young rascal's head for leaving his poor blind father so long in the cold. It's the way with them boys doctor; let them get their nose outside the——"

"Yes! yes!" I interposed, "but to your story."

"I was a-goin' to tell you," he went on deliberately, "that I was waiting there when I heard someone walking up and down on the other side of the street, and by-and-bye the gent comes across and he says to me:

"'Why the deuce don't you go home on a night like this, and go to bed?' and he chucks a sixpence into my

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box. Before I could tell him about my boy George, he turns away and walks up the street again.

"D'reckly after, I hears someone else coming along from the Vicarage way, and two of 'em stops. The gentleman as gave me the tanner says:

"'Have you got it?'

"Then he laughs and say's: 'By Jove! you are a good 'un. Come down here,' and they comes across the road and goes down Brewer's Hill just behind where I was standing.

"Next day I heeard all about the robbery, and I says to myself—I'll bet my life the chap as gave me the sixpence is in it. When they told me there was a reward of one hundred pounds, I kept my ears pretty wide open I can tell you, for I knew I could swear to his voice anywhere."

"But, why in the name of fortune did you not communicate with the police?" I inquired.

Barty—the truth must be told—spat upon the ground violently; "Not any police for me, thankee. If I told them anything about it, they'd only go and muddle it. If they did happen to tumble on the man by mistake, they'd collar the reward—not me."

"But you told me just now it was a woman who confessed."

"So it were. I'm a-leanin' up to that. This afternoon I was at my pitch, when all at once I heard the same steps that I heard two months ago, but the steps of the other party, d'ye understand, not the gent's."

"Do you mean to say you can recognise people by their steps?"

"Yes;" he answered with an air of triumph, "as easily as you can their faces. I knowed the steps, because the party walked in a dragging sort of way, and because she was wearing them india-rubber things for keeping out the wet, just as she did on the night when the things were took.

"Well, I knowed it was the same person by the walk and the jemimos, but I was certain I was right when I heeard her cough. I noticed it that fust night—not what we calls a churchyard cough, but a reg'lar tearing cough, as makes you sorry for anyone as has it.

"She was on my side of the road, and—I don't know what made me do it, doctor—as she goes by me, I puts out my hand like this and catches her by the dress, and I says: 'Stop! What about them diamonds at the Vicarage?'

"She gave a sort of screech that made my blood run cold, and falls on the pavement. Then a crowd came around, and I was so turrified that I didn't know my own name for a minute or two. Very soon a constable comes, and someone tells him that I had assaulted a lady and knocked her down. I was more turrified than ever. But when the Inspector comes up, I sticks to my story, and he says: 'Barty, there's something in this,' and he takes the lady back to the place she'd come from.

"In a bit he comes back to me and he says: 'You've done the trick this time, Barty, for the lady has admitted that she took the diamonds.' So I shuts up shop for the day, and when I gets back to my old woman, I admit my feelings were too much for me."

Leaving the blind man to chuckle over his good fortune, I went on to my house, to find the Vicar at the front door, alternately plucking the door handle and pounding with the knocker.

"My niece is dying!" he said; and without another word, we tore through the streets to the Vicarage.

Our speed availed us nothing, for an attack of hœmorrhage—the result of weakness and excitement—had mercifully released the unfortunate girl from the need of appearing at the bar of an earthly court of justice.

Questioned by her aunt, she had admitted that whilst the guests were at dinner, she had risen from her bed, abstracted the diamonds from the diva's room, put on her macintosh and overshoes and had gone out to meet someone whose name she resolutely declined to disclose, but to whom she had "lent" the jewels to save him from ruin.

"Someone I love," she said, passionately, in answer to inquiries as to the man's identity.

Her failing strength forbade those about her to press her further with questions, and she died without having spoken the word they wished.

A few days after Miss Forrest's death, a package came to her, addressed in the handwriting of her scapegrace cousin, the son of the Vicar's only brother. It contained Madame Benedetti's diamond cross and a letter:

"My Dearest Old Girl,

"I have landed my coup at last, and have got into still waters again—for a time at any rate. I released the valuables from old Levenstein yesterday, and send them on to you. The old rascal grinned when he handed them back: I rather think he suspected something.

"I shall never forget how splendidly you got me out of the tightest corner I was ever in in my life.

"In haste, with heaps of love,

"Yours ever,

"Frank.

P. S. "You can easily put the cross in some place where it will be 'discovered.' Burn this as usual."

{Athol Forbes.
{David Garth.

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THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE GRIFFITH

CHAPTER LXX.

THE MORROW OF THE STRIFE.

SHORTLY after noon on the following day the *Ithuriel*, with Natas, Natasha, Arnold, and Tremayne on board, rose into the air from the grounds of Buckingham Palace and headed away to the northward. The control of affairs was left for the time being to a committee of the members of what had once been the Inner Circle of the Terrorists, and which was now the Supreme Council of the Federation.

This was under the joint presidency of Alexis Mazanoff and Nicholas Roburoff, who was exerting his great and well-proved administrative abilities to the utmost in order to atone for the fault which had led to the desertion of the *Lucifer*, and to amply justify the intercession of Natasha which had made it possible for him to be present at the last triumph of the Federation and the accomplishment of the long and patient work of the Brotherhood.

There was an immense amount of work to be got through in the interval between the pronouncement of the judgment of Natas on the Czar and his Ministers and the execution of the sentence. After twenty-four hours in Newgate they were transferred to Wormwood Scrubbs Prison, and there, under a guard of Federation soldiers, who never left them for a moment day or night, they awaited the hour of their departure to Siberia.

Communication with all parts of the Continent and America was rapidly restored. The garrisons of the League were withdrawn from the conquered cities, gave up their arms at the depôts of their respective regiments, and returned to their homes. The French and Italian troops round London were disarmed and taken to France in the Federation fleet of transports. Meanwhile three air-ships were placed temporarily at the disposal of the Emperor of Austria, the Kaiser, and the King of Italy, to convey them to their capitals, and furnish them with the means of speedy transit about their dominions, and to and from London during the drawing up of the new European Constitution.

A fleet of four air-ships and fifteen aerostats was also despatched to the Russian capital, and compelled the immediate surrender of the members of the Imperial family and the ministers of the Government, and the instant disarmament of all troops on Russian soil, under pain of immediate destruction of Petersburg and Moscow, and invasion and conquest of the country by the Federation Armies. The Council of State and the Ruling Senate were then dissolved, and the executive passed automatically into the hands of the controllers of the Federation.

Resistance was of course out of the question, and as soon as it was once known that the Czar had been taken prisoner and his army annihilated, no one thought seriously of it, as it would have been utterly impossible to have defended even Russia against the overwhelming forces of the Federation and the British Empire, assisted by the two aerial fleets.

The *Ithuriel* after a flight of a little more than an hour, stopped and descended to the earth on the broad, sloping, and now snow-covered lawn in front of Alanmere Castle. Lord Marazion and his daughter, who as it is almost needless to say, had been kept well-informed of the course of events since the Federation forces landed in England, had also been warned by telegraph of the coming of their aerial visitors, and before the *Ithuriel* had touched the earth, the new mistress of Alanmere had descended the steps of the terrace that ran the whole length of the castle front, to welcome its lord and hers back to his own again.

Then there were greetings of lovers and friends, well known to each other by public report and familiar description, yet never seen in the flesh till now, and of others long parted by distance and by misconception of aims and motives. But however pleasing it might be to dwell at length upon the details of such a meeting, and its delightful contrast to the horrors of unsparing war and merciless destruction, there is now no space to do so, for the original limits of this history of the near future have already been reached and overpassed, and it is time to make ready for the curtain to descend upon the last scenes of the world-drama of the Year of Wonders—1904.

Tremayne was the first to alight, and he was followed by Natasha and Arnold at a respectful distance, which they kept until the first greeting between the two long and strangely-parted lovers was over. When at length Lady Muriel got out of the arms of her future lord she at once ran to Natasha with both her hands outstretched, a very picture of grace and health and blushing loveliness.

She was Natasha's other self, saving only for the incomparable brilliance of colouring and contrast which the daughter of Natas derived from her union of eastern and western blood. Yet no fairer type of purely English beauty than Muriel Penarth could have been found between the Border and the Land's End, and what she lacked of Natasha's half Oriental brilliance and fire she atoned for by an added measure of that indescribable blend of dignity and gentleness which makes the English gentlewoman perhaps the most truly lovable of all women on earth.

"I could not have believed that the world held two such lovely women," said Arnold to Tremayne, as the two girls met and embraced. "How marvellously alike they are, too! Surely there must be some relationship. They might be sisters?"

"Yes, I am sure they are," replied Tremayne. "Such a resemblance cannot be accidental. I remember in that queer double life of mine, when I was your unconscious rival, I used to interchange them until they almost seemed to be the same identity to me. There is some little mystery behind the likeness which we shall have cleared up before very long now. Natas told me to take Lord Marazion to him in the saloon, and said he would not enter the castle till he had

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spoken with him alone. There he is at the door! You go and make Muriel's acquaintance, and I will take him on board at once."

So saying, Tremayne ran up the Terrace steps, shook hands heartily with the old nobleman, and then came down with him towards the air-ship. As they met Lady Muriel coming up with Arnold on one side of her and Natasha on the other, Lord Marazion stopped suddenly with an exclamation of wonder. He took his arm out of Tremayne's, strode rapidly to Natasha, and, before his daughter could say a word of introduction, put his hands on her shoulders, and looked into her lovely upturned face through a sudden mist of tears that rose unbidden to his eyes.

"It is a miracle!" he said in a low voice that trembled with emotion. "If you are the daughter of Natas there is no need to tell me who he is, for you are Sylvia Penarth's daughter too. Is not that so, Sylvia di Murska—for I know you bear your mother's name?"

"Yes I bear her name—and my father's. He is waiting for you in the air-ship, and he has much to say to you. You will bring him back to the castle with you, will you not?"

Natasha spoke with a seriousness more weighty than her words, but Lord Marazion understood her meaning. He stooped down and kissed her on the brow, saying:

"Yes, yes. The past is the past. I will go to him, and you shall see us come back together."

"And so we are cousins!" exclaimed Lady Muriel, slipping her arm round Natasha's waist as she spoke. "I was sure we must be related to each other, for though I am not so beautiful——"

"Don't talk nonsense, or I shall call you Your Ladyship for the rest of the day. Yes, of course we are alike, since our mothers were twin-sisters, and the very image of each other, according to their portraits."

While the two girls were talking of their new-found relationship. Arnold had dropped behind to wait for Tremayne, who, after he had taken Lord Marazion into the saloon of the *Ithuriel*, left him with Natas, and returned to the castle alone.

That evening, when the lamps were lit and the curtains drawn in the library at Alanmere, the same room in which Tremayne had seen the Vision of Armageddon, Natas told again and for the last time the story of Israel di Murska, the Jewish-Hungarian merchant, and Sylvia Penarth, his beautiful English wife, whom he had loved better than his own faith and people, and whose awful fate was now avenged as no human wrong had ever been avenged before.

He told, too, how he had taken his child-daughter out of the keeping of his wife's sister and her husband in order that he might educate her as an instrument of vengeance on his enemies, and of the old quarrel, now healed after twenty years of bitterness, which had arisen from this cause when he devoted her young life to conspiracy and plotting instead of letting her take her place in the world in which Lady Muriel had grown up.

He told, too, without the slightest reserve, how he had cast his spell over Tremayne and subjugated his will to his own purposes, and how he had intended to bind him for ever to the Brotherhood by giving Natasha to him in marriage, when "the Fates willed it otherwise," as he said in concluding his story, "and I was saved from doing a great wrong, for the intention to do which I have done my best to atone."

He paused for a moment and looked across the fireplace at Arnold and Natasha, who were sitting together on a big, low lounge that had been drawn up to the fire. Natasha raised her eyes for a moment and then dropped them. She knew what was coming, and a bright red flush rose up from her white throat to the roots of her dusky, lustrous hair.

"Richard Arnold, in the first communication I ever had with you I told you that if you used the powers you held in your hand well and wisely you should, in the fulness of time, attain to your heart's desire. You have proved your faith and obedience in the hour of trial and your strength and discretion in the day of battle. Now it is yours to ask and to have."

For all answer Arnold put out his hand and took hold of Natasha's, and said quietly:

"Give me this!"

"So be it!" said Natas. "What you have worthily won you will worthily wear. May your days be long and peaceful in the world to which you have given peace!"

And so it came to pass that three days later, in the little private chapel of Alanmere Castle, the two men who held the destinies of the world in their hands took to wife the two fairest women who ever gave their loveliness to be the crown of strength and the reward of loyal love.

For a week the Lord of Alanmere kept open house and royal state, as his ancestors had done five hundred years before him. The conventional absurdity of the honeymoon was ignored, as such brides and bridegrooms might have been expected to ignore it. Arnold and Natasha took possession of a splendid suite of rooms in the eastern wing of the castle, and the two new-wedded couples passed the first days of their new happiness under one roof without the slightest constraint; for the castle was vast enough for solitude when they desired it, and yet the solitude was not isolation or self-centred seclusion.

Tremayne's private wire kept them hourly informed of what was going on in London, and when necessary the *Ithuriel* was ready to traverse the space between Alanmere and the capital in an hour, as it did more than once, to the great delight and wonderment of Tremayne's bride to whom the marvellous vessel seemed a miracle of something more than merely human skill and genius.

So the days passed swiftly and happily until the Christmas bells of 1904 rang out over the length and breadth of Christendom, for the first time proclaiming in very truth and fact, so far as Christendom was concerned, "Peace on earth and Good-will to Man."

* * * * *

But in the East the red tide of battle was still surging fiercely to and fro as the swarthy hosts of the Moslems fought their way through and through the countless swarms of Mongols that kept pouring eastward only to die like flies in innumerable multitudes before the irresistible tempest of valour and enthusiasm that the raising of the Banner of the Prophet had let loose upon them.

The Council of the Anglo-Saxon Federation, well aware that no peaceful arguments would have any weight with these fiery warriors, drunk with battle and mad with triumph, had decided to let the Moslem and the Buddhist fight out the Armageddon of the East between them until the fittest survived.

All the approaches to Europe were rigidly guarded to prevent any incursion. The Mediterranean was patrolled by dynamite cruisers, which permitted no Turkish vessels, or, indeed, any that did not fly the Federation flag in addition to its own, to pass between Europe and Asia or Africa. The Dardanelles, the Bosphorus, and the Black Sea were held by an overwhelming naval force, and four millions of men were kept under arms ready to be concentrated at any point at which the hosts of Sultan Mohammed Reshad might approach too near to the area of Federation control.

(*To be continued.*)

A man is always proud of his children who are large for their age, except when he wishes them to travel on half-fares.

The trouble with a young fellow in love is that he imagines everybody else is in love with the girl too; while if the truth were known, no one but himself ever looks at her.

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Readers of SUNDAY READER may enter with this Coupon.

SIR WM. MACCORMAC AND THE FIELD HOSPITALS.

Extract from Sir Wm. MacCormac's Report to the "Lancet" after the battle of Tugela:

". . . . Awaiting their turn the wounded were "lying outside in rows, which were being continually "augmented by the civilian bearers coming in from "the field.

"As each wounded man reached the hospital he "was served with a hot cup of bovril, large cans "of which were boiling outside the tents."

BOVRIL

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Malcolm's Christmas.

It was six o'clock on a cold November evening; snow lay on the ground; a few flakes were falling through the clear air.

Before a mansion in Park Lane a gentleman paced irresolute; his eyes dwelt anxiously upon one window in particular, across which the shadow of a woman was sometimes thrown.

Presently a hand drew back the curtain, and a face looked out into the street.

"She is not looking for me," said he, bitterly. "Ah! how shall I tell her?"

He almost staggered as he mounted the steps to the door, and even then stood irresolute, latchkey in hand, ere he entered the house.

"Is that you, Malcolm?" said a sweet voice.

"Yes, I am late."

"Then you must make haste; we dine out to-night."

The speaker came forward to the lighted hall; a beautiful woman, whose exquisite toilette glittered with gems. He turned from the vision with something like a shudder.

"How shall I tell her?" he murmured, as he wearily mounted the stairs.

He rang the bell as he entered his room.

"Tell Mrs. Hastings I am indisposed. I shall not be able to accompany her this evening."

The message sent, he sat down and buried his face in his hands.

His thoughts roved idly to the vision of his youth, in which he, supremely happy in a loving wife, hewed down every obstacle in his path and made himself a famous man. What was the reality he bitterly asked himself.

He had deliberately married a woman who had frankly assured him she could never love him—he had thought he could give all and demand nothing in exchange.

He shuddered as he recalled the loneliness and dreariness of the one year of married life.

A knock at the door interrupted these reflections; his wife stood there as he answered the summons, and his eyes, blinded by her dazzling beauty, discerned no new expression in the haughty face.

"You are ill?"

He did not reply; he stood looking down on her as one in a dream.

"Your room here is cold!" she said. "It is a bitter night. Will you not come to my boudoir? The fire is pleasant there."

He stared at her, then shook his head. "I have often told you," he said with scorn, "that I cannot breathe in such luxurious surroundings. My tastes are simple."

She glanced round the room, which, in comparison with hers, was simplicity itself.

"Then if I cannot do anything for you," she began——

"The carriage is waiting, madam," said a servant approaching.

"I shall return early," she said, "Au revoir."

Again he was left to his bitter thoughts. Too restless to keep still he wandered about the house from one magnificent room to another. At length he entered the boudoir, in the furnishing of which an expensively artistic taste was visible. He cast a scornful look on the luxurious room.

"It smothers one," he muttered.

His eyes, which restlessly wandered from one thing to another, now rested on a half-finished portrait, which, short-sighted though he was, he perceived to be a man's face. For a long time he hesitated to approach nearer. It was mean to take advantage of his wife's absence; yet as he thought thus, he moved forward, and peered into the pictured face. He started back in intense surprise—the colour rushed over his face.

"Do you think it good?" his wife's voice said at his side. For the hours had passed, and she had returned, and he was now looking at it for the tenth time.

"I am too much surprised at your choice of a subject to give a critical opinion," he replied.

"Your head makes a fine study," she replied calmly.

He bit his lip, with a cruel sense of her coldness.

"You are surprised to find me here?"

"A little. But come to the fire; you have a thoroughly chilled appearance. Stephen tells me you have not dined. I have ordered a light repast for you. You can take it here."

He was conscious of feeling cold and faint. She drew him forward to an easy chair; and, the tray, with food and wine, appearing as though by magic, he found himself eating and drinking at her request, and he glanced up more than once inquiringly into her eyes. He read nothing there to lighten his heart.

She took up a piece of embroidery and sewed diligently.

"By the way," she remarked, in a casual manner, "is it true that the Middleton Bank has stopped payment? Have you not shares in it?"

He made no reply. Her eyes met his with some anxiety.

"My whole fortune was invested there," he replied.

"Then you are ruined?" she said calmly.

"Utterly."

Both were silent then. Isabel's eyes glanced round the luxurious room, then she looked at her husband.

"I suppose it will not affect any of my personal property," she said anxiously. "You do not know, I believe that my Uncle Herbert, who died a week ago, has left me his house."

"No! I was not aware of it. Where is it?"

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SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watmall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 29lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Durnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

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"Oh! A farm right in the country," she replied, flushing under his intent gaze.

"You will not be destitute then, even if I fail to earn money at once," he said with keen sarcasm.

"That is well," she said quietly.

"You were frank when I asked you to marry me. You said you would do so to escape poverty—to assure yourself a life of luxury—you said I was not the type of man you could ever love."

"Have you remembered my foolish words?" she said flushing.

He laughed bitterly.

"A man does not easily forget such words as these," he said. "On my part, I promised never to obtrude my love for you."

"I absolve you from any idea that you have ever done so," she replied coldly.

"I promised to keep you as a princess; you were only to wish, and your wishes should be fulfilled. Have I hitherto kept my promise?"

"Every tangible wish has been gratified," she said gravely.

"At least you do me justice," he said, rising to his feet. "But now the failure of this bank makes it impossible to me to continue my practice of forestalling your wishes."

"You will have to give up this house?"

"Certainly; it takes a princely income to keep up."

"Will everything have to be sold?"

"Everything of value belongs to my creditors."

There was a silence.

"I have not had time to think. Possibly I may try my luck in Canada as soon as I can make arrangements for your comfort here."

"It would be a good plan," she remarked quietly. "You appear to like an outdoor life. You enjoy farming, do you not?"

"My father was a farmer. I inherit an instinct for outdoor pursuits."

She yawned a little and looked bored. He hastily rose and went away, bitterly hurt.

"At last!" she cried triumphantly, "at last!"

She sang a little roulade as she moved about the room. He heard it in the distance.

"She can sing when I am in such trouble. It is too cruel!"

* * * * *

A few days later he found her busied in packing her trunks.

"I am going to make a few visits while you are arranging for the sale," she said. "You may not hear from me for a few weeks, but I shall be safe and in good hands."

There was a pitiful appeal in his eyes—which might have gone to the heart of any woman—not to desert him in this bitter hour. His lips moved voicelessly, as if he would have made an appeal. She turned away, and went on with her packing.

When he came that evening she was gone. Every little token of her personal presence had vanished as though it had never been there. He received two short letters during the next few weeks; just an assurance that she was comfortably situated.

As she gave him no address he did not attempt to answer her letters. Two days before Christmas he received another letter from her.

"I am in a village called Shepstone," she wrote. "It is important to my comfort than you come to me at once. Catch the three o'clock train from Euston. A trap will be waiting for you. Come to-morrow—Christmas Eve."

He had just time to catch the train, for the letter had been delayed on its road to him. As he dashed on through the gathering gloom he mused sadly enough on his future. The heart seemed gone from his efforts to begin life again. For whom should he work? For a woman whose whole soul was wrapt up in self, in love of ease and luxury?

"I am the kind of man no woman would love," he said to himself. "Yet I am not without the qualities which should command esteem. I am incapable of an insincerity; to love once is to love eternally with me. Should I have done the bidding of this calm, selfish woman to-night did I love her less?"

Arrived at Shepstone he was instantly accosted by a man, who said he had brought a trap to meet him. Then he was driven swiftly for miles over the hard frozen roads through country enveloped in snow—too moody in humour to care to talk to his silent driver.

At length they entered a private drive, and presently reached a little cluster of buildings.

"That's the house—where you see them lights; she has lights in every window," said the man as he drove to the door of a quaint, old-fashioned farmhouse. The door opened as if by magic, and Malcolm stumbled blindly into the lighted hall. The door closed behind him.

"Welcome home, dear Malcolm," said a sweet voice at his side. His beautiful wife stood there, her eyes dancing with fun—and—what else did Malcolm begin to read in those lustrous eyes?

"Isabel!" he cried. He suddenly bent down over her—as her soft arms clasped his neck.

"Oh, Isabel! am I dreaming?" he cried, as he clasped her close.

"Take of this big coat," she replied, "and come into the kitchen. Do you think you could eat your supper just once in the kitchen, Malcolm—because you know I am going to cook it for you."

"Only tell me where we are. Is this Heaven—have we died suddenly—or am I wandering in dreams of bliss that might be mine—if—if—Isabel loved me?"

"There is no if," she said, drawing him to the glowing fire. "Oh! my love—how blind you have been. I have loved you for many a long month—but how could I tell you so—when you *would* believe I cared only for the presents you lavished upon me. Malcolm, this is my home, and I give it to you, it is Uncle Herbert's old farm and homestead. Won't this do as well as going out to Canada. He died leaving me this and all his immense wealth—wealth no one dreamed of his possessing."

"This is indeed a blessed Christmas Eve," said Malcolm, unwilling to lose his wife for an instant from his sight—and following her from pantry to kitchen as she bustled about her housewifely duties.

Ah! What an hour of bliss followed the cosy supper—how much to tell, how much to hear, what arrears of loving confidences to be made up.

And what a Christmas day was that which followed—what a truly divine service that which they so gratefully attended in the morning!

Blissfully, the day sped by—and plans for the future and bright visions of the happiness to be theirs filled their cup to the brim.

God speed them in their journey onward—sorrows will pass lightly over their heads, for they love one another.

Henry C. Dermer.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

On this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors, with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set are comparatively easy of solution, while others are designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the sender of the greatest number of correct solutions, and to the senders of the ten next highest number of correct ones will be presented either one of our silver-plated pencil cases or a copy of a popular six-shilling novel. Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, March 5th, 1900.

No. 46.

My initials are often my finals, and my whole is a doll.

1. A sword. 2. To employ. 3. A vessel.

No. 47.

Form the name of a district in Africa by using the first and third letters of words signifying "disposition," "enthusiasm," "crowd," "inquisitive," and "restlessness."

No. 48.

A kind of conveyance can be expressed by a word which, if read backwards, will give the name of the place where it is generally kept at night.

No. 49.

L R G N A L O O I E N T S
| | | | | | | | | | |
E A N S G H O T R S S M O

Rearrange the above pairs of letters so that the two rows, read horizontally, form a well-known proverb.

No. 50.

The following are the consecutive consonants in a quotation from one of Scott's works. Fill in the vowels:

W D T H T N R Z L
R C L M R M M N T S R
F R D T N S W R.

No. 51.

Form a square word from the names of the following:

"A fortified place."
"A musical instrument"
"A certain kind of leather."
"A portable canvas house."

One of the diagonals means, "to sound a horn."

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM Nos. 21 to 27.

Four competitors were absolutely correct in their solutions, and the prize of £2 has been equally divided among them. The fortunate ones are:

W. Henderson, 26 Princes Street, Perth, N.B.
Walter Thomas, 99 Islip Street, Kentish Town, N.W.
Miss E. Wallis, 71 Knollys Road, West Norwood.
J. Kean, 1 Clerk Street, Edinburgh.

The following each differed in one word only, and to these we have forwarded one of our silver plated pencil-cases:

Miss Mollie Rafferty, Edinburgh; Thomas Picton, Fulham, S.W.; O. S. Sinnatt, Manchester; J. H. Cockerill, Kingsland Road, N.; B. McFarlane Burrell, Plumstead; G. Hudson, Finsbury Park, N.; Miss K. Zerfahs, Upper Holloway, N.; A. Neve, Woolwich; S. F. Harrall, Plumstead, S.E.; J. E. M. Hall, Brockley, S.E.; Miss M. Zerfahs, Upper Holloway, N.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES Appearing in No. 579, Feb. 3rd, 1900.

No. 28. NINE. Ninepins, Spin.

No. 29. JOIN—Connect; SEVERED—Cut; CONNECTICUT.

No. 30. SAND - RING - HAM.

No. 31. "A little learning is a dangerous thing."—Pope: "Essay on Criticism," Page 2.

No. 32.
War*D*
Ar*B*a
R*E*ar
*D*ark.

No. 33. Dickens' "Oliver Twist."

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NOT HEAVY TO HIM.

The man on the elephant's back is nothing to the elephant. The big beast doesn't mind him any more than one of those immense dray horses you see in London minds the brass ornaments on his harness. Yet on my back or yours the man would be a load; and, if fastened to a lark's wings, the little brasses would hold him to the earth.

Thus, we are reminded, my thoughtful friends, that there are no absolute facts. The burden depends on the back. Albeit Samson walked off with the gates of Gaza, an ordinary garden gate would, I am sure, prove all that we should want to lug. It follows that weight or heaviness can, as the advertisements say, "be supplied in a variety of styles."

When, for example, Mr. Sidney Challanger mentions in a letter that at a certain period he was "heavy," he does not mean that he tipped the scales at a stone or two more than usual. His horse would have felt *that,* in case he rode one; but the truth is that at the time referred to he was actually under his proper weight by several pounds.

What he wants us to understand is that he was *heavy to himself;* it was not an increase of *weight* but an increase of *weakness,* having practically the same result. His explanation is that in the early part of 1890 he began to feel ill and out of sorts. He went about in a mazy way, feeling badly without knowing what the trouble was or how to account for it.

"I had," Mr. Challanger goes on to tell us, "a nasty taste in the mouth and no relish for my meals." But eat we all must, or starve; and eat *he* did. Not much, though. At best it was a forced business. Nothing tasted natural or good, and he took just enough to keep him going until the next meal time should come round.

"And even for that I had to suffer," he says. "After getting it down I had, almost immediately, a sense of fulness or distension at the stomach and pain at the chest as if a bit of food had lodged there—which couldn't be."

No, nothing lodged anywhere. What there was of it went straight down into Mr. Challanger's stomach, where it at once began to ferment and produce a gas which caused the feeling of fulness, while the irritated nerves set up the pain. It was not too much food but food not digested—food turned sour in the stomach—with the whole body behind it failing of the needed stimulus and nourishment of food, and wondering what the matter was. It was this state of matters that made him, to use his own words, "heavy, drowsy, and languid."

Any river in England, after a long drought in summer, *looks* just as Mr. Challanger *felt*—heavy, drowsy, and languid. And for an identical reason—the lack of necessary supplies. Wait an instant, though! Don't miss the point.

The rain, when it comes, fills the river by a thousand little channels falling directly into it. Not so as to food and body. Between *them* is a process; a mechanical, chemical, and vital operation—digestion. Mark you that, and act accordingly. Whether in the sky or on the ground water is water—the same thing.

But food and body are not the same thing. The first must be transmuted into the second by the miracle called digestion; for of all God's ways in nature none is more awful, more amazing, more glorious. And, when impeded or overborne, none which punishes the interference more certainly and swift.

"I got little or no sleep," continues our friend, "and awoke in the morning tired out, as after a hard day's work. Presently I could hardly walk, for very weakness, and from time to time had to give up work altogether. No medicine helped me—and I tried plenty.

"After three wretched years of this, Mrs. Bird of Tallistorn, told my wife about Mother Seigel's Syrup, and, through her, advised me to try it. She said my ailment was indigestion and the Syrup would cure it. And it did. One bottle greatly relieved me. I could eat freely, and food agreed with me. I persevered with the remedy and got strong as ever. All the pain and heaviness left me, and I felt light and energetic, although I have gained in weight."—Sidney Challanger, Gladstone Villa, Cwm, near Waunllwyd, Mon., August 30th, 1898.

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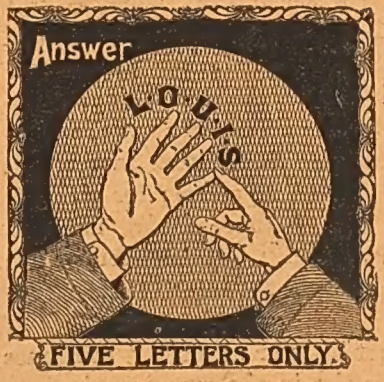

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